

DITOGA

**Digital tracking of
VET graduates**

via auto-analytics to
enhance the quality and sustainability
of vocational and educational training programmes

DITOGA VET Graduate Tracking Strategy - Transnational Research Report



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The VET Graduate Tracking Strategy Guide is the first Intellectual Output of the Erasmus+ project DITOGA: Digital tracking of VET graduates via auto-analytics to enhance the quality and sustainability of vocational and educational training programmes. It provides VET professionals with a detailed description of the framework, aims and objectives as well as fields for application of the DITOGA VET graduate tracking strategy by clarifying how the data of VET graduates collected digitally through the key factors will contribute to the ongoing evolution of VET programmes and how the VET graduate tracking strategy can be implemented successfully.

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DITOGA VET Graduate Tracking Strategy

- Transnational Research Report

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to enhance the quality and sustainability
of vocational and educational training programmes

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1. Introduction

The main objective of the DITOGA project is to enhance the quality and sustainability of vocational and educational training programmes by collecting relevant data from VET graduates. This data will provide VET institutions with necessary information on the success but also on potential fields of improvement of their current programme contents and enable them to align their repertoire according to current needs in the labour market. This includes hard skills in various professions, knowledge, skills, and competences, but also soft skills and personal attitudes. The **Transnational Research Report** is part of IO.1. and contains individual national research and the results of the national surveys.

2. EU-Tracking Strategies

In the desk research for the Transnational Report, attention was paid to which EU initiatives and concepts already exist in relation to tracking of VET graduates. The different approaches of the individual EU initiatives and concepts were also examined in order to find suitable parallels for the DITOGA project.

2.1. Eurograduate Pilot Survey

The EUROGRADUATE Pilot Survey, as a follow-up of the EUROGRADUATE Feasibility Study, aims to provide the European Commission and the countries with sound evidence allowing a well-informed decision if a European wide graduate survey should be conducted periodically. Thus, the project intends to provide clear and concrete guidelines for how such a full study can provide data of the highest attainable quality which is comparable across all EU countries and answers the most urgent policy questions posed by stakeholders at national and European level. Moreover, this pilot survey produces high quality data for the participating countries, within the limits set by the pilot study, which has a policy value in its own right.

The pilot survey has taken place in fall 2018 in 6 pilot countries (one of them Austria). The survey targets graduates one and five years after graduation in order to cover their short- and mid-term development. The core topics covered by the EUROGRADUATE Pilot Survey are: labour market relevance, skills, (international) mobility and democratic values.

The pilot project is carried out by the EUROGRADUATE consortium: Research Centre for Education and the Labour Market (Maastricht), German Centre for Higher Education Research and Science Studies (Hanover), Institute for Advanced Studies (Vienna), DESAN Research Solutions (Amsterdam), cApStAn (Brussels/ Philadelphia), GESIS Leibnitz-Institut für Sozialwissenschaften (Cologne).

HER at IHS is one of the three leading partners in the consortium and is responsible for conducting the survey in the pilot countries in close collaboration with national research partners.¹²

2.2. European Labour Force Survey (EU-LFS)

The European Labour Force Survey (EU-LFS)

Eurostat disseminates EU-LFS (Labour Force Survey) data through four main channels:

1. Tables in the online database

Most, but not all, of Eurostat's EU-LFS data offer consists of tables disseminated in Eurostat's online database in the theme 'Employment and unemployment (Labour Force Survey)' according to the following categories:

- LFS main indicators (a set of specific EU-LFS results which are quarterly updated)
- LFS detailed quarterly and annual survey results

¹ <https://www.ihs.ac.at/ru/higher-education-research/projects/eurograduate/>

² www.eurograduate.eu

- LFS specific topics
- LFS ad-hoc modules ³⁴

2. Statistical publications

3. Anonymised datasets for researchers

4. Tailor-made extractions for tables not available in the online database

Main indicators

The main indicators is a collection of the most important EU LFS results. The aim of the main indicators is to provide users with key statistics on the labour market.

The screenshot shows the Eurostat website interface. At the top, there's a header with the Eurostat logo, navigation links (News, Data, Publications, About Eurostat, Help), and a search bar. Below the header, a breadcrumb trail reads: European Commission > Eurostat > Employment and unemployment (LFS) > Data > Main tables. The main content area is titled 'EMPLOYMENT AND UNEMPLOYMENT (LFS)' and 'MAIN TABLES'. It features a sidebar with navigation options like Overview, Data, MAIN TABLES, Database, Visualisations, Publications, Results, Quality reporting, Methodology, Main concepts, Development, Legislation, and Other labour market statistics. The main content area lists several statistical series under the heading 'Employment and unemployment (Labour Force Survey) (t_employ)'. These include 'LFS main indicators (t_lfsi)' and 'LFS series - detailed annual survey results (t_lfsa)'. Specific series listed are: Population, activity and inactivity - LFS adjusted series (t_lfsi_act), Jobless households - children (tps00181), Jobless households by sex (tps00182), Employment - LFS adjusted series (t_lfsi_emp), Employment rate by sex, age group 20-64 (t2020_10), Employment growth by sex (tps00180), Persons employed part-time - Total (tps00159), Employees with a contract of limited duration (annual average) (tps00073), Unemployment - LFS adjusted series (t_une), Total unemployment rate (tps00203), Long-term unemployment rate by sex (sdg_08_40), Harmonised unemployment by sex (teilm010), Harmonised unemployment by sex - age group 15-24 (teilm011), Harmonised unemployment by sex - age group 25-74 (teilm012), Harmonised unemployment rate by sex (teilm020), Harmonised unemployment rate by sex - age group 15-24 (teilm021), Harmonised unemployment rate by sex - age group 25-74 (teilm022), LFS series - specific topics (t_lfst), Employment rate of the age group 15-64 by NUTS 2 regions (tgs00007), Employment rate of the age group 20-64 by NUTS 2 regions (tgs00102), Employment rate of the age group 55-64 by NUTS 2 regions (tgs00054), Unemployment rate by NUTS 2 regions (tgs00010), and Long-term unemployment rate (12 months and more) by NUTS 2 regions (tgs00053). Some series are marked with 'Updated' labels.

Eurostat overview

Special work is done to ensure that the main indicators can be used as time series. In general, the adjusted series are the result of corrections of main breaks in series, estimation of missing values and reconciliations of the EU-LFS data with other sources, mainly National Accounts and national statistics

³ <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/education-and-training/data/database>

<https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/regions/data/database>

⁴ <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/lfs/data/database>

on monthly unemployment. For the period previous to 2005, when the EU-LFS was conducted annually instead of quarterly in some countries, published data are the result of an interpolation of available annual data into quarterly data.

EU-LFS main indicators are estimated and updated four times a year. Whenever some indicator is published both in EU-LFS main indicators and in detailed survey results (see EU-LFS data), for instance the unemployment rates, the reference figure is published under main indicators. All main indicators are pre-defined, and users can access the information in the form of tables, graphs and maps.

The production of the main indicators (quarterly results) is accompanied by an EU-LFS release calendar which provides transparency for users on the availability of the data and favours a timeliness data release of the results.

The EU-LFS database contains detailed statistical information for users.⁵

It contains

1. detailed quarterly and annual EU-LFS results
2. LFS specific topics
3. LFS ad-hoc modules

Additionally, the EU-LFS results are also disseminated in print or electronic **statistical publications** concerning statistics on the labour market or social statistics. The scope of these publications is limited because the traditional paper publications were discontinued after 2002.

Europe 2020⁶ is a strategy for jobs and smart, sustainable and inclusive growth. Two of the five Europe 2020 headline targets⁷ are monitored with LFS indicators (75 % target for employment rate 20-64; share of early school leavers under 10 %; at least 40 % of 30-34 years to have completed tertiary education). EU and national targets are available in the data tables.

The EU-LFS, like all surveys, is based upon a sample of the population. The results are therefore subject to the usual types of errors associated with sampling techniques. Eurostat implements basic **guidelines** intended to avoid publication of results which are statistically unreliable or which risk allowing identification of individual respondents.⁸

2.3. European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training (CEDEFOP)

Cedefop is one of the EU's decentralised agencies. Founded (1) in 1975 and based in Greece since 1995, Cedefop supports development of European vocational education and training (VET) policies and contributes to their implementation. The agency is helping the European Commission, EU Member States and the social partners to develop the right European VET policies.

⁵ <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/lfs/data/database>

⁶ https://ec.europa.eu/info/business-economy-euro/economic-and-fiscal-policy-coordination/eu-economic-governance-monitoring-prevention-correction/european-semester_en

⁷ <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/europe-2020-indicators/europe-2020-strategy/overview>

⁸ https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/EU_labour_force_survey_%E2%80%93_data_and_publication#Data_for_researchers

Cedefop: helping develop the right policies to provide the right skills:

Why is that important?

Europe's strategy for 2020 (2) is a route for smart, sustainable and inclusive economic growth through knowledge and innovation, which sets an employment rate target of 75%.

The success of this strategy depends on the skills of Europe's workforce. Enterprises need people with the skills required to compete and provide high-quality goods and services.

People need the right qualifications to find jobs. People with low levels of or no qualification are nearly three times more likely to be unemployed than those with high qualifications. In the EU, around 75 million people, nearly a third of the working population, have low levels of or no qualification. Too many young people, around 15%, leave school without any qualifications.

Cedefop also defines eight key competences in vocational education and training:

- Communication in the mother tongue
- Communication in foreign languages
- Competences in maths, science and technology
- Digital competence
- Learning to learn
- Interpersonal, intercultural and social competences, civic competence
- Entrepreneurship
- Cultural expression ⁹

2.4. The European Credit System for Vocational Education and Training (ECVET)

According to the Recommendation (European Parliament and Council of the EU, 2009), the ECVET was to be applied gradually to VET qualifications at all EQF levels, and used for transfer, recognition, and accumulation of Learning Outcomes as from 2012.

The aim of the European Credit system for Vocational Education and Training (ECVET) is to:

- make it easier for people to receive validation and recognition for work-related skills and knowledge acquired in different systems and countries – these can then count towards vocational qualifications
- make it more attractive to move between different countries and learning environments
- increase the compatibility between the different Vocational Education and Training (VET) systems in place across Europe, and the qualifications they offer

⁹<http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/publications-and-resources/key-documents>
<http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/publications-and-resources/publications/4041>
http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/files/4041_en.pdf
http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/files/8083_en.pdf

- increase the employability of VET graduates, and give confidence to employers that each VET qualification requires specific skills and knowledge ¹⁰¹¹

2.5. The European Qualifications Framework (EQF)

The European Qualifications Framework (EQF)

The Qualifications Framework of the European Higher Education Area (QF-EHEA), consisting of a three-tier system of degrees (Bachelor, Master and PhD), is compatible with the European or National Qualifications Framework. This enables the automatic assignment of acquired degrees to the EQF or NQF.

In December 2004, education ministers from 32 European countries reached an agreement (Maastricht Communiqué) to develop a common European Qualifications Framework. The EQF sees itself as a meta-qualification framework that links the qualification systems of different countries and thus helps to achieve greater transparency in the education landscape.

Main objectives:

- promoting cross-border mobility
- support for lifelong learning

Any qualification in any country of the European Union can be related to the EQF. The framework consists of eight reference levels defined by a series of descriptors. Each descriptor describes learning outcomes that are necessary to achieve the qualification corresponding to a specific level. Learning outcomes are not assigned directly to the EQF, but first to the level of a National Qualifications Framework, which then corresponds to the EQF level.

EQF level descriptors – main elements:¹²

Level descriptor elements		
Knowledge	Skills	Responsibility and autonomy
In the context of EQF, knowledge is described as: • theoretical and/or • factual	In the context of EQF, skills are described as: • cognitive (involving the use of logical, intuitive and creative thinking) • practical (involving manual dexterity and the use of methods, materials, tools and instruments)	In the context of the EQF, responsibility and autonomy is described as the ability of the learner to apply knowledge and skills autonomously and with responsibility.

EQF level descriptors ¹³

¹⁰ <http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/node/11836>

<http://www.ecvet-toolkit.eu/>

¹¹ https://ec.europa.eu/education/policy/vocational-policy/ecvet_en

¹² <https://lehr-studienservices.uni-graz.at/de/lehrservices/europaeischer-hochschulraum/qualifikationsrahmen-eqr-nqr/der-europaeische-qualifikationsrahmen-eqr/>
http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/files/5566_en.pdf

¹³ <https://ec.europa.eu/ploteus/en/content/descriptors-page>

2.6. Correlations of country specific initiatives

Country-specific initiatives that focus on tracking of VET graduates and their future career paths

Austria

Honestly spoken, there are no real initiatives in Austria that focus on the tracking of VET graduates. If they do not remain in employment after their apprenticeship in the company concerned, i.e. in an employment relationship, their further career path will not be recorded. It is only recorded when they get unemployed and therefore register at the Austrian Labour Market Service (AMS). However, VET centres for example, do not have access to this data. Moreover, there is an insurance extract from the health insurance company, which is only available for the persons concerned themselves or for future employers due to the registration as an employee. Based on this extract, it is visible how long the respective person worked in different companies, so also the apprenticeship is visible.

Additionally, there is statistic data provided by the Austrian Chamber of Commerce (WKO). However, this data only presents how many apprentices are in which economic/industrial sector, how many of them are male or female and a comparison to the year before. Also, there is data about the total amount of final apprenticeship examinations in all sectors and how many graduates succeeded or failed. Still, there is no data that records future career paths of VET graduates.¹⁴

Furthermore, **Statistik Austria** provides additional data on VET graduates as of 2017.¹⁵

Belgium

Bruxelles Formation – Ulysses Survey

The ‘Ulysses Survey’ is a survey conducted by Bruxelles Formation through telephone interviews. Bruxelles Formation is a public training organisation responsible for the vocational training of researchers, job seekers and workers, who are Brussels-Capital-based workers in Brussels. Ulysses is a telephonic survey that maps the career paths of job seekers in the year after they followed a training in the centres of Brussels Formation. This survey exists since 2004. The option of telephonic surveys was preferred to ensure that respondents fully understand the questions. Administrative data collected by Brussels Formation is used to establish the social background of the surveyed individuals (age, gender, nationality, etc.). Bruxelles Formation is currently looking into the possibility of updating the tracking system by making use of available administrative data (on employment and re-entry into education or training) to complement the survey data. This would remove survey bias as well as response subjectivity.¹⁶

¹⁴ <https://www.wko.at/service/zahlen-daten-fakten/daten-lehrlingsstatistik.html>

¹⁵ https://www.statistik.at/web_de/nomenu/suchergebnisse/index.html
https://www.statistik.at/web_de/statistiken/index.html

¹⁶ http://www.bruxellesformation.be/Actupress/2017/12_decembre/ulysses_2017.pdf
ec.europa.eu/social/BlobServlet?docId=19209&langId=en

Study on the labour market integration and longitudinal follow-up of VET learners in the Walloon Region Survey regional VET IVET/CVET¹⁷

Study of young people's trajectories during and after VET in the French speaking system of the Brussels region. Period 2012-2014.

Over a period of 2 years, the METICES-ULB research center conducted a study on the trajectories of young people graduating at CEFA Brussels and the efp between 2003 and 2012. This study aims to answer the following questions: beyond the measurements/surveys at a fixed date, how many graduates enter alternating learning trajectories? What is the profile of young people who opt for these trajectories? What trajectories do they prefer? What is the future of these young people on the job market after they have completed those trajectories?

The study is innovating because it links and interprets data from different databases.¹⁸

VDAB School Leavers Study

The VDAB School Leavers Study provides insight into labour market transitions of recent school leavers in Flanders. The study uses administrative data from the VDAB (Flemish Public Employment Service), the Department for Education and Training and SYNTRA, the Flemish Agency for Entrepreneurial Training. The study looks at the whole population of school leavers across the Flemish education system (i.e. not just VET), including both graduates and early school leavers. It covers school leavers from lower secondary education up to university. Every year the study looks at a cohort of recent school leavers and tracks whether they registered as jobseeker with the VDAB during the year after leaving school; whether they were still registered as a jobseeker after one year and whether during this year they had signed off at any point (assuming they gained work experience during this time). As an illustration, the results published in 2018 look at the cohort that left school in June 2016 and checks whether they registered as jobseekers between June 2016 and June 2017.¹⁹

Effectiveness measurement conducted by Syntra West

This is meant to track the effectiveness of the followed vocational trainings after graduating. What is measured: Number/percentage of graduates that become self-employed within 5 years after graduation, rate of professional activity, unemployment rate, acquisition of new competences and wages. Results in Dutch report.

Report on career paths of qualified VET Graduates.

¹⁷ https://portail.umons.ac.be/FR/universite/facultes/fpse/servicesetr/methodo/recherches/recherches_finalis%C3%A9es/Documents/rapport%20sysfal.pdf
<https://web.umons.ac.be/fr/alumni/enquete-insertion-professionnelle/>

¹⁸ <https://ccfee.be/fr/publications/alternance/2012-2014-etude-sur-les-trajectoires-des-jeunes-dans-les-dispositifs-bruxellois-francophones-d-alternance>

¹⁹ <https://www.vdab.be/sites/web/files/doc/schoolverlaters/schoolverlatersrapport2018.pdf>
<https://www.vdab.be/trends/schoolverlaters.shtml>

As relatively little is known about this in Flanders, the report focuses on the professional career of VET graduates. Different VET levels are compared and discussed, also in relation to general education. ²⁰

Questionnaire drafted by University of Hasselt to track graduates' career paths (University Education, not VET) ²¹

Finland

There are several initiatives in Finland that focus on tracking of VET graduates and their career paths. The information is mostly quantitative. Some of the initiatives can be found in portals which collect information or statistics from different sources. Here are some examples:

Vipunen

This is the education administration's reporting portal. The Ministry of Education and Culture and the Finnish National Agency for Education are jointly responsible for its content.

Vipunen's statistics are based on data and registers collected by the Statistics Finland, the Ministry of Culture and Education and the Finnish National Agency for Education. The statistics and indicators are available give the information about education in a number of educational sectors, placement of students after completion, research conducted in higher education institutions, the population's educational structure and the socio-economic background of students.

Reports on the placement of vocational education and training completers provide information on the entry into employment or further education and other activities of completers one, three or five years after qualification. Data is available for the 2009– 2016 reference period. ²²

The Employment Bulletin

It contains statistics on unemployment, open job vacancies, and employment service developments. It for example contains statistics on how many of VET education completers is unemployed. Ministry of Economic affairs and Employment of Finland is responsible for its content. Statistics updates on a monthly basis. The data is collected from the customer service registry used by the TE offices. ²³

Statistics Finland

It combines collected data with its own expertise to produce statistics and information services. The statistics of Finland describe for example employment during studies among students attending post-comprehensive school education. The data on employment among students are produced by combining Statistics Finland's individual-based data files on students with the data of employment

²⁰ https://steunpuntssl.be/Publicaties/Publicaties_docs/ssl-2015.05-4-0-hoe-doen-de-afgestudeerden-van-TSO-en-BSO-het-op-de-arbeidsmarkt

²¹ https://www.uhasselt.be/Documents/UHasselt/onderwijs/intranet/kwaliteitszorg/VI_Vragenlijst_Opleiding_Alumni.pdf

²² <https://vipunen.fi/en-gb/vocational-education-and-training>

²³ http://julkaisut.valtioneuvosto.fi/bitstream/handle/10024/161160/TKAT_Oct_2018_en.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y

statistics. No surveys are conducted among students. The statistics contain a diversity of data on the education and employment of students. The statistics have been produced annually since 1995. In 2005 the population of the statistics was modified to include only students 18 years of age or older. ²⁴

Education management information service Arvo

This is customised data collection system that is used to collect standardised and comparable nationwide educational data for impact evaluation. One of the surveys in Arvo is VET-feedback for students who have completed a vocational qualification.

The purpose of the VET-feedback survey is to obtain student feedback on the way the studies are implemented. The responses will be used to improve the activities. The students are supposed to respond to the questions based on their personal experience. The feedback is given anonymously, and the responses will not be reported at the individual level. All responses will be reported in groups of at least five respondents. The student will be asked to give VET-feedback twice during the studies: when they begin and when they are about to complete their studies. At the final phase of studies, they are asked to estimate what they will be doing after finishing studies, for example are they going to be employed. ²⁵

The tracking of VET education completers is even more important

Reform of upper secondary education in Finland in 2018 changed the funding of VET education. The funding comprises strategic funding, core funding, performance-based funding and effectiveness-based funding. The share of strategic funding is at least 4 % of the appropriation for VET. The remaining part of the appropriation for VET is granted on a basis according to which the share of basic funding is 50%, performance-based funding 35% and effectiveness-based funding 15%.

In the future the funding will be based on for example employment of the students which is part of effectiveness-based funding. For that reason, the authorities in Finland are tracking the employment situations of the graduates after a certain time- period from graduating. ²⁶

Ireland

Provider led FET graduate “tracking” processes

With the advent of the ability to systematically record learner outcomes on a single national learner platform, several provider-level “tracking” process quickly emerged:

Collection of learner outcome data at the point of completion of the course

This practice is where any available data at the time of the learner completing their course is entered, on or very close to, the point of the learner finishing on the programme. Although a widely used process, it has an obvious immediate disadvantage: there may be few learners at the course end stage who have secured employment or indeed a further or higher education of training course.

²⁴ http://www.stat.fi/til/opty/index_en.html

²⁵ https://wiki.eduuni.fi/pages/viewpage.action?pageId=68258693&preview=/68258693/70202919/Amispalaut_e_kysymykset%2001-07%202018%20alkaen%20EN.docx

²⁶ <https://minedu.fi/en/reform-of-vocational-upper-secondary-education>

In many cases a time period might need to elapse to allow a more accurate recording of the outcome for learners, who may, at the time of the course end, be in the process of still applying for employment, or a further or higher education or a training course.

This effect is particularly prevalent where the course term is that of an academic year, such as with Post Leaving Certificate courses (PLCs), who follow an academic year. Often at the end of May or early June, the learn outcomes may not be clear until perhaps the following September, when many of the further and higher education courses begin.

Ad hoc collection of FET Graduate outcomes

Many FET providers also collect FET graduate outcome via a number of lesser used “ad hoc” data collection methods. These include gathering of learner follow up data at such events as graduation ceremonies, where the certificate recipients are asked to update their economic status on arrival to the ceremony. Other providers use their websites to encourage past learners to provide updates.

At best, the return in terms of data gathering from such methods is modest and can often lack consistency in the type and quality of data gathered. Furthermore, it has been the experience of this writer that ETBs generally do not have a consistent standard operating procedure for FET graduate tracking. Even within ETBs, there appears to be significant variation in the timing, methods and type of information sought from FET graduates by providers. Within colleges and training centre there also appears to be variation in the motivation of individual teachers and instructors to engage in follow up processes with their own class learners. While some are very motivated to learn of the outcome of past students and learners, other are perhaps less so.

Local Follow-up surveys after the course has ended

Many providers engage in either telephone, postal — or more recently — email surveys of their past learners within a few months of the course end date. While this method can gather some valuable learner outcome data, the consistency of approach can vary from provider to provider. Likewise, learners can be sometimes difficult to make contact with, either by telephone or by email or written letter, with the result that response rate can sometimes be low, and the volume of outcome data be relatively low in terms of the overall number of target learners. According to a SOLAS 2018 document entitled “*Setting the Baseline for Strategic Funding and Planning Agreements*” the author Selen Guerin indicated the following:

“... it is not always straightforward to track learners after they leave a course. SOLAS has conducted a pilot study with 3 ETBs (Cork, Lois Offaly and Kerry) for a similar exercise to track FET learners after course completion. The success of the pilot study has given support to this exercise and to a much broader study on outcomes evaluation of the FET Learners. Even though the ‘best’ estimates can be provided by the ETBs with regards to graduate outcomes, the data is not consistently available on all learners for each program by each ETB. In other words, the data is incomplete, and can be unreliable as the information is collected from the learner and cannot be verified.”

Likewise, it was also noted in the Further Education and Training Strategy 2014–2019, published by Department of Education and Skills SOLAS that: ⁴

“The data infrastructure around FET is weak, particularly by international standards. There is a bewildering myriad of FET data; a multiplicity of data-gathering systems across FET; a lack of

systematic data collection and analysis of FET data at national (and local) level; and limited use of data in decision making at all levels.”²⁷

This statement is certainly borne out by the diversity and range of FET learner data collection as evidenced both within and across ETBs nationally.

Italy

Through the desk research Italy could find several reports carried out by different institutions such as the Ministry of Education, University and Research (MIUR), the Institute for the Development of Vocational Training of Workers (Isfol) in order to understand different aspects of the VET system in Italy. We also found a regional report regarding Tuscany about the importance of vocational training to satisfy the demand of up to date digital competences and professionalism for companies¹. However, all these reports are not specifically aimed at tracking VET graduates in their future career path in the world of work. As far as specific regard on this matter, we found two interesting programmes: AlmaLaurea and AlmaDiploma.

AlmaLaurea

AlmaLaurea is an inter-university consortium established in 1994 counting 75 universities and representing 90% of university students. The Consortium is funded by the Universities that are part of it, by funds from the Ministry of Education, University and Research, by the companies and the bodies that use the services offered. From 2015 AlmaLaurea is member of SISTAN, the National Statistics System.

AlmaLaurea surveys the Profile and the Employment status of the university graduates annually after 1, 3 and 5 years and provides to the member Universities, to the MIUR and to the Italian National Agency for the Evaluation of the University and Research Systems (ANVUR) reliable documents and data bases to simplify the decision-making processes and the planning of the student training activities, guidance and services. The annual report is the tool that deepens the educational and employment status of graduates after one, three and five years from graduation, investigates the prospects of the labor market and the relationship between university studies and employment opportunities. Returns a wide and detailed picture of the type of work performed, the profession, the salary of the employee and their satisfaction with the work done, the branch and sector in which they work, the use of skills acquired at university.²⁸

Furthermore AlmaLaurea

- Monitors the students' learning paths and analyses the graduates' features and performance at the university and in the job market, making it possible to compare different university courses and venues (universities)
- Collects and makes available online the curriculum vitae of the graduates to facilitate the meeting between supply and demand of qualified jobs
- Evaluates the needs and professional profiles required by public and private, Italian and foreign companies and carries out staff recruitment and search via AlmaLaurea Srl, a subsidiary of the

²⁷ The liability for this quotation lies with the project partner.

²⁸ <http://www.almaLaurea.it/>

AlmaLaurea consortium, authorised by the Ministry of Labour and Social Policies to carry out staff recruitment and selection.

AlmaDiploma

The experience of AlmaLaurea led, in 2000, to the creation of AlmaDiploma, that aims at bridging and connecting secondary schools, universities and the job market. Among others, it:

- Facilitates the access of graduates to the world of work
- Support companies in their research for qualified personnel
- Provide schools with information to verify the effectiveness of the training courses offered.

AlmaDiploma is a school association aimed at supporting upper secondary schools in the evaluation process of training systems, in the design of training activities and in their vocational and career guidance policies. AlmaDiploma, which is supported by the Ministry of Education, University and Research, counts 310 upper secondary schools among its members.

Every year, AlmaDiploma carries out surveys that generate useful reports to **evaluate** the internal and external **effectiveness of upper secondary education**. These surveys are carried out on students and graduates of the educational institutes associated with AlmaDiploma:

- AlmaDiploma Graduates profile: obtained from the elaboration of the AlmaDiploma questionnaires filled in by students shortly before getting the diploma certificate, it analyzes the characteristics and the performances of the graduates allowing their comparison.
- AlmaDiploma Graduates' outcomes at distance. This survey analyzes the outcomes of graduates at one, three and five years from the graduation and allows to evaluate the quality of the training acquired. The survey is particularly meaningful as it involves the students already covered by previous surveys, identifying the changes that have taken place. Important issues contained in this report are about:
 - Evaluation of the school experience
 - Employment and training outcomes
 - University education
 - Non-university post-diploma training
 - Entry into the labour market
 - Characteristics of current work
 - Characteristics of the company
 - Wages/salaries
 - Satisfaction with current job
 - Use and request of the diploma in the current job.

From the AlmaDiploma website it is possible to download previous reports since 2003.

This survey includes Technical and Vocational educational institutes; however, it doesn't involve VET training providers accredited to the Regional authority (providers of regional vocational trainings). Furthermore, it is developed from the perspective of schools and former students, but it doesn't involve companies.

Libretto Formativo del Cittadino

The last initiative we may mention, even though we consider it to be more a “skills portfolio” useful for clients than a way to track career path of individuals useful for VET institutions, is called “Libretto formativo del Cittadino”. It is inspired by a general legislative recommendation (in Law 30 and Decree 276, both from 2003), which was defined operationally at the State-Regions Conference and is thus an example of socio-institutional coordination. The “Libretto formativo del cittadino” is a document divided into two sections. One section contains a record of the professional and training history of the individual, while the other section lists the individuals’s competences, legitimising these qualifications through certification, with a logic similar to the Europass portfolio.

In 2005, an inter-ministerial decree (Decree of 10 October 2005) gave the Libretto official status and established the format it should take. The Libretto is presented as the ‘citizen's identity card for countrywide mobility, from the point of view of both their learning experience and work experience’.

The process of skill audits defined for the Libretto includes four stages:

- Reception and guidance

Before introducing the Libretto in detail, practitioners must inform the beneficiary of its general characteristics and the implications of its use. The individual's motivation and the nature of their personal project should also be specified at this stage.
- Reconstruction of the applicant's experience and competences

During this stage, the practitioner analyses the individual's education and training history, employment experience and any self-learning they have achieved. The results of this analysis and a summary version of it are recorded under the responsibility of the individual concerned.
- Production of proof or evidence, documents "supporting" the reconstruction of the individual's experience. Possible types of evidence are:
 - education and training qualifications issued by the Ministry of Education or by the Regions;
 - certification and testimonials of other training activities;
 - documents concerning employment experience;
 - competences that emerged clearly through the interview.

However, the guidelines also mention "examples of products accomplished". Practitioners must not merely "demand" evidence: they must also help Libretto users to find and present it.
- Recording of the data and information to be included in the Libretto, and its compilation.

This stage concerns the formalisation of the information collected. As a result, the quality of this process largely determines the quality of the final document.

The “Libretto del Cittadino” is differently used in the 21 Italian Regions, in Tuscany it is widely disseminated and used even in the Public Employment Services.

Spain

Spain faces three big obstacles to the successful tracking of VET graduates. Firstly, there is no law that makes tracking of graduate employability compulsory, secondly there is a lot of inconsistency across

institutions in terms of those who are responsible for the process. Also, in the studies that have been carried out on the subject so far there have not been questions pertaining to soft skills and how they have influenced people's employability.

In Spain there is not a structured approach to VET graduate tracking at national level. Graduate tracking measures are established at regional level.

It should be understood to begin with that Spain is a parliamentary monarchy composed of seventeen *comunidades autónomas* (autonomous or devolved regions) and two cities with similar devolved powers. These are further divided up into fifty provinces. Carrying out this type of tracking falls under the remit of the regional administrations, which develop their own laws, plans and actions.

Problem 1.- It is not compulsory to undertake tracking of university and VET graduates in Spain, but merely a recommendation.

In Spain there is no national law making graduate tracking compulsory. Even now that it is a priority for Europe it remains a recommendation and each region is free to legislate on the matter or not. As a matter of fact, for the moment, only Asturias has introduced a law making this type of tracking compulsory.

Problems 2 and 3.- Graduate tracking in Spain is highly fragmented.

The responsibility for tracking university and VET graduates in order to extract data is shared between three types of institutions: statistical institutes and education and employment authorities.

To further complicate matters, relevant political powers to legislate in these areas are devolved to the regional administrations in Spain, which leads to many institutions carrying out tracking with different policies, tools and intensities.

With regards to the statistical institutes, the State Administration's statistical system is responsible for producing official statistics for the Spanish state (for use by central government), as well as the official statistics for the European Statistical System.

Moreover, given Spain's administrative structure, each autonomous region has its own statistical system charged with compiling statistics within their individual territorial scope. In every case these systems are mandated by their respective legal regulations (statutes of autonomy, statistical laws and plans etc.).

This framework leads to no relevant data being available on the employability of VET graduates at state level.

Studies are often published with a delay of 2 to 5 years and there is not a single question about the usefulness of the skills they acquired or about the skills they have needed and didn't have. Therefore, it is impossible to draw conclusions about soft skills and employability.

As regards the employment authorities: The State Public Employment Service (SEPE) alongside the regional Public Employment Services constitute the current National Employment System. This service is made up of 20 organisations, as well as municipal bodies. Each one of them can put forward their own laws, subsidies, programmes and statistical monitoring.

At the moment, SEPE is the most complete and up-to-date source of graduate tracking data and other institutions rely on their studies.

SEPE publishes their annual State Labour Market Report²⁹ and the State Youth Labour Market Report³⁰.

The regional employment services also publish some studies along similar lines. The problem is that these bodies do not carry out their surveys with a significant sample nor with a standardised set of items in order to be able to collate their results. Neither do they publish data annually, however some studies are quite comprehensive.

In the case of the Basque Country, the last Basque employment service (Lanbide) study is from 2016 and looks at 2015 graduates.

In terms of these skills, questions are asked about written and oral expression, teamwork, leadership, decision-making, creativity, management and IT skills.

The problem is that students do not know what each skill refers to and how it materialises in their day-to-day working lives, which means that this self-evaluation is not very realistic. It could be more appropriate to ask questions with practical, run-of-the-mill examples, and about how graduates tackle these situations, in order to better evaluate how much a soft skill is used on a daily basis and the student's level of proficiency in it.

There are also studies conducted by other relevant bodies such as business associations (regional and local), but all of these studies are based on very small sample sizes and very inconsistent sets of questions, which makes them of little use at state level.

In terms of the education authorities

Education in Spain is regulated by the Ministry of Education however the regional governments are charged with managing and financing the educational institutions in their territory.

In terms of VET, there is a lot of variation between autonomous regions as regards methodologies and adaptation to new challenges. VET offers over 150 training cycles within 26 professional categories, with theoretical and practical content tailored to each different professional field. Each one of these categories is designed to deliver training in the foremost emerging and innovative professional fields of the economy and therefore those with the greatest employability rates.

Businesses need workers who are not only able to put the knowledge they acquire into practice, but who can adapt to the changes our society is experiencing. Bearing in mind the composition of the business sector, small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) are the main driver of economic growth and job creation, accounting for two thirds of European jobs. To be competitive, SMEs need qualified and specialised workers. Meeting this increase in demand for qualified and specialised workers is the greatest challenge for VET, which must prepare its students to enter the professions most sought-after by businesses now and in the future. There is an increase in recruitment compared to previous years. The greatest relative increases were seen in various large work categories: catering, personal services, security and sales, plant and machinery operation and scientific and intellectual technicians and professionals. On the other hand, the economic crisis has increased the educational attainment gap: high numbers of unemployed people with few qualifications who cannot be absorbed into the labour market. This may be due to higher-level qualifications being required or needs being concentrated in other sectors. It is therefore necessary to boost VET, which places great importance on learning on the job. This is even more true if we also consider that we are in need of technical professionals, who are more and more sought-after in the business world.

²⁹ http://www.sepe.es/contenidos/observatorio/mercado_trabajo/3017-1.pdf

³⁰ http://www.sepe.es/contenidos/observatorio/mercado_trabajo/3067-1.pdf

Basque VET is considered to be among the world's best and is used as a model by many countries. In 2017, the EU chose Basque VET as a benchmark for education in Europe. The Basque government realised that in order to support the acquisition of soft skills by students it had to completely transform teaching methodologies. Thus, as well as the launch of dual VET in the Basque Country and the close relationships with businesses, what makes this model unique is the transformation of its training cycles into "High-Performance Cycles" using the Ethazi methodology.

The project partner can therefore summarise by saying that there are very little up-to-date data at state level about VET graduate employability tracking. These data do not recognise the importance of soft skills and when studies are produced which do focus on them, it is evident that there is little consensus as to what soft skills are, which of them bring value to businesses and what level of each is necessary in that respect. The first challenge is to clarify conceptualisations of soft skills and define the levels of mastery for each of them, how to acquire them and how to demonstrate them.

Nowadays in Spain, despite all its diversity, it is a reality for everyone that institutions support the acquisition of skills by VET students, but the students are not committed to acquiring them during their free training. This is because they are unaware of them and do not understand their importance (depending on the age and maturity of the students).

Moreover, the soft skills training that is given is very generic and is not adapted to different levels and needs (a metal worker and a sales manager have different needs in terms of communication, time management or teamwork).

Businesses request technicians with more soft skills but they do not know how to define which ones or at what level they are necessary for each post either. Therefore, in the end soft skills rarely appear as requirements in job offers.

Finally, teaching staff want to teach these skills, but it is difficult to pull together a formal CV with these new soft skills, even if in some autonomous regions such as the Basque Country they are being intensively trained in them.

Erasmus + Projects:

In this context and based on the EU's interest in VET graduate employability tracking, Erasmus+ projects are springing up in this area. For the moment there are two, in addition to the project partner ones in which Spain is participating.

TRACKTION "ADVANCING GRADUATE TRACKING AND ALUMNI RELATIONS IN VET SCHOOLS" 2017

TRACKTION³¹ is a collective endeavour comprising 6 organisations from Spain (2), Estonia, Italy, the Netherlands and the UK. In terms of expertise, the partnership achieves a good balance including 3 VET Schools (Alfa College, PKHK, Cometa Formazione/Oliver Twist School), 2 intermediary organisations bridging policy and practice at regional level (VALNALON and TKNIKA) and a research-focused organisation (Education & Employers Taskforce).

TRACKTION focuses on improving VET graduate tracking at institutional level. Tracking is commonly understood here as all systematic approaches that VET institutions put in place to record information on graduates, with regard to their learning progress, skills acquired, perceptions, routes into employment, self-employment, or further training.

ON TRACK³² 'TRACKING LEARNING AND CAREER PATHS OF VET GRADUATES, TO IMPROVE QUALITY OF VET PROVISION' 2018:

³¹ <https://tracktionerasmus.eu/>

³² <http://ec.europa.eu/programmes/erasmus-plus/projects/eplu-project-details/#project/2018-1-SK01-KA202-046331>

Spain is participating in this project through POLITEKNIKA IKASTEGIA TXORIERRI S.COOP (a subsidised private VET and secondary school in the Basque region) alongside other European participants. The “On Track” project will contribute to skills needs identification, gathering relevant data from VET graduates. “On Track” will develop, evaluate and implement a VET graduate tracking system for graduates of initial vocational education and training schools and institutes.

Incorporation of EU initiatives and concepts into country-specific initiatives

Austria

As country-specific initiatives are already very limited and/or not existent there is no or little relation to relevant EU-initiatives. Still, CEDEFOP, ECVET and EQF concepts are used and adapted, but not in VET graduates’ tracking.

Belgium

The initiatives stand alone, but some of them are discussed and compared to other EU-initiatives in this report: ‘Mapping of VET graduate tracking measures in EU Member States - Final Report.’³³

Finland

Some of the initiatives mentioned above provide information in EU-level, for example for the use of Cedefop (European Centre for the Development of Vocational training) and Eurostat (Statistical office of the European Union).

Ireland

As part of the data collection requirements under European Social funded programmes, there is a requirement to provide data on the profile of participating learners, as well as information regarding labour market outcomes as well as certification results, and financial information regarding labour market programmes and training courses. In Article 122 (3) of EU Regulation 1303/2013 (Common Provisions Regulation or CPR) it states that:

“Member States shall ensure that...all exchanges of information between beneficiaries and a managing authority, a certifying authority, an audit authority and intermediate bodies can be carried out by means of electronic data exchange systems”

Under Article 125(2) of this Common Provisions Regulation, it states also that a *managing authority* ³⁴

³³ ec.europa.eu/social/BlobServlet?docId=19209&langId=en

³⁴ A managing authority may be a national ministry, a regional authority, a local council, or another public or private body that has been nominated and approved by a Member State. Managing authorities are expected to conduct their work in line with the principles of sound financial management.

“must establish a system to record and store in computerized form data on each operation necessary for monitoring, evaluation, financial management, verification and audit, including data on individual participants in operations, where applicable”

Furthermore, is also states in that this Common Provisions Regulation in Article 126 (d) that *certifying authorities* ³⁵

“must ensure that there is a system which records and stores, in computerised form, accounting records for each operation, and which supports all the data required for drawing up payment applications and accounts”

In this context each of the 16 Education and Training Boards (ETBs) in Ireland has obligations (with associated operational guidelines) under the ESF Programme for Employability, Inclusion and Learning (PEIL) 2014 – 2020 ³⁶. These obligations include reporting of both financial and non-financial data and the former process is completed annual through a data upload from each ETB’s Programme and Learner Support System (PLSS). PLSS is national software platform used by ETBs. It is a live database of ETB courses and learners, which are visible on web systems and can be accessed by Department of Employment and Social Protection³⁷ staff, who can then refer individuals to ETB courses.

Article 111 of the Common Provisions Regulation sets out the specific deadlines for the submission of Annual Implementation Reports (AIRs) to the European Commission. Provision of AIRs to the Commission in accordance with those deadlines is strictly enforced, and failure to submit an AIR by the relevant deadline could have negative repercussions for the operational programme, and Ireland’s ability to fully drawdown its European Social Fund allocation.

In general, the managing authority is required to submit an AIR for a year by 31 May of the following calendar year. For the AIRs to be submitted in 2017 and 2019, the deadline is 30 June of those years.

³⁵ A certifying authority is responsible for guaranteeing the accuracy and probity of statements of expenditure and requests for payments before they are sent to the European Commission. Management of the European Regional Development Fund, European Social Fund and Cohesion Fund is shared with member countries, regions and other intermediary bodies.

³⁶ <https://www.esf.ie/en/Regulations-Guidance/Guidance/>

³⁷ www.welfare.ie

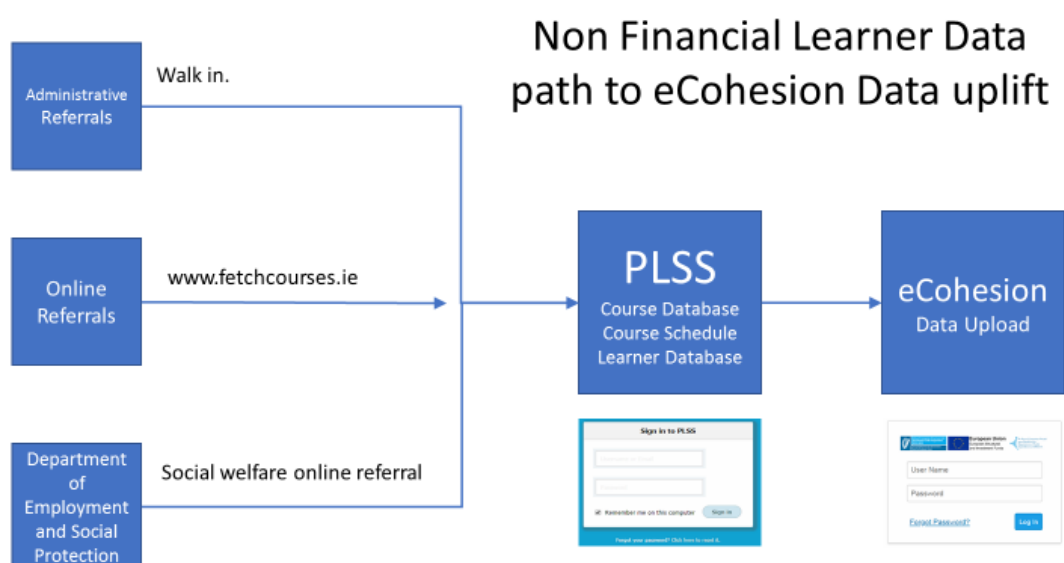


Figure 1

The Commission's large eCohesion project was designed to reduce the administrative burden related to the EU's Cohesion and Rural Development Policies.

eCohesion was designed to ensure that, within the 2014-2020 Regulatory framework, beneficiaries of Structural Funds will be able to use a legally binding fully electronic and paperless exchange with bodies managing these Funds (at national, regional and local level).

It is in this context that within each of the 16 ETBs, there is at least one or more registered eCohesion users, who are charged with uploading either financial or non-financial data. In the case of the non-financial data, this is first exported to a local file, before being uploaded onto the eCohesion website.

Italy

The different reports Italy found as well as AlmaLaurea and AlmaDiploma do not use EU tools nor use EU concepts. However, in several reports one can find comparisons with other EU countries / statistics. For what concerns the "Libretto Formativo del Cittadino", the same logics as in the Europass documents were found.

Spain

European concepts are used within our state-level initiatives and they follow Cedefop directives etc. But the development of coordinated initiatives is in its infancy, and only the two aforementioned Erasmus+ projects are designed with an EU focus since the rest of the projects predate Europe's interest in carrying out this type of tracking. It will therefore take time to adapt them accordingly. The Ethazi methodology also respects this EU directive but is not a tracking system in and of itself. In the draft version of the 5th Basque VET Plan the need for data collection and the creation of a big data tool to increase our prospective capacity have been included.

3. Empirical Survey

3.1. Introduction

In the methodological framework of national focus groups in each partner country, 10 staff of VET institutions were asked to share their professional perspective on the key factors and relevant requirements necessary for aligning their training programmes to the current needs of the work field in a continuous and flexible fashion. Additionally, 5 representatives of businesses per country were invited to the focus group in order to acquire first-hand information about the demands of the world of work beyond the educational horizon. The companies interviewed ranged from small to medium-sized ones (SMEs), but also internationally working ones, covering a broad spectrum of businesses.

Overall, 91 VET staff and business representatives were involved in this activity.

These questionnaires built the basis of a research to which extent apprentices/trainees/new workers graduating from educational and training systems can use their acquired skills at work properly. As agreed within the DITOGA project partnership, the questionnaires were divided into five clusters each of which contains four questions that deal with apprentices/trainees/new workers and their performance in the working world.

The surveys were conducted based on the sample below which was developed by the project partnership:

A EMPLOYMENT	1 very good	2 good	3 satisfactory	4 sufficient	5 not sufficient
A1. Can the apprentices/trainees/new workers adapt to the job requirements/job profile?					
A2. Can the apprentices/trainees/new workers identify unique selling propositions (USP) about themselves? Can they differentiate from others <u>in order to</u> convince?					
A3. Can the apprentices/trainees/new workers portray themselves and their competences professionally in front of employers?					
A4. Do the apprentices/trainees/new workers have a clear understanding of the tasks/knowledge, skills, competences required by the occupation?					
Additional remarks:					



B SOCIAL INTERACTION	1 very good	2 good	3 satisfactory	4 sufficient	5 not sufficient
B1. Do the apprentices/trainees/new workers take initiative?					
B2. Do the apprentices/trainees/new workers seem to be openminded and willing to improve?					
B3. Are the apprentices/trainees/new workers punctual and are willing to follow break times and working hours?					
B4. Are the apprentices/trainees/new workers able to co-operate and cope with feedback/criticism? (Please also comment below.)					
Additional remarks:					
C SELF PERCEPTION	1 very good	2 good	3 satisfactory	4 sufficient	5 not sufficient
C1. Do the apprentices/trainees/new workers ask questions when they are unsure? Are they afraid of admitting uncertainty?					
C2. Do the apprentices/trainees/new workers seem aware of their own strengths and weaknesses?					
C3. Can the apprentices/trainees/new workers clearly express what they like and dislike about the tasks and profession?					
C4. Are the apprentices/trainees/new workers able to estimate their own abilities realistically? (Please also comment below.)					
Additional remarks:					



D WORK ENVIRONMENT	1 very good	2 good	3 satisfactory	4 sufficient	5 not sufficient
D1. Are the apprentices/trainees/new workers capable of dealing with the demands of the physical environment (height, heat, cold, noise, isolation,)?					
D2. Do the apprentices/trainees/new workers have a realistic understanding of the demands of the workplace?					
D3. Do the apprentices/trainees/new workers recognise and adapt to the values of the company?					
D4. Do the apprentices/trainees/new workers interact with customers appropriately and in a good manner?					

Additional remarks:

Please, name the top three attributes apprentices/trainees/new workers should have to be part of a successful team.

1.

2.

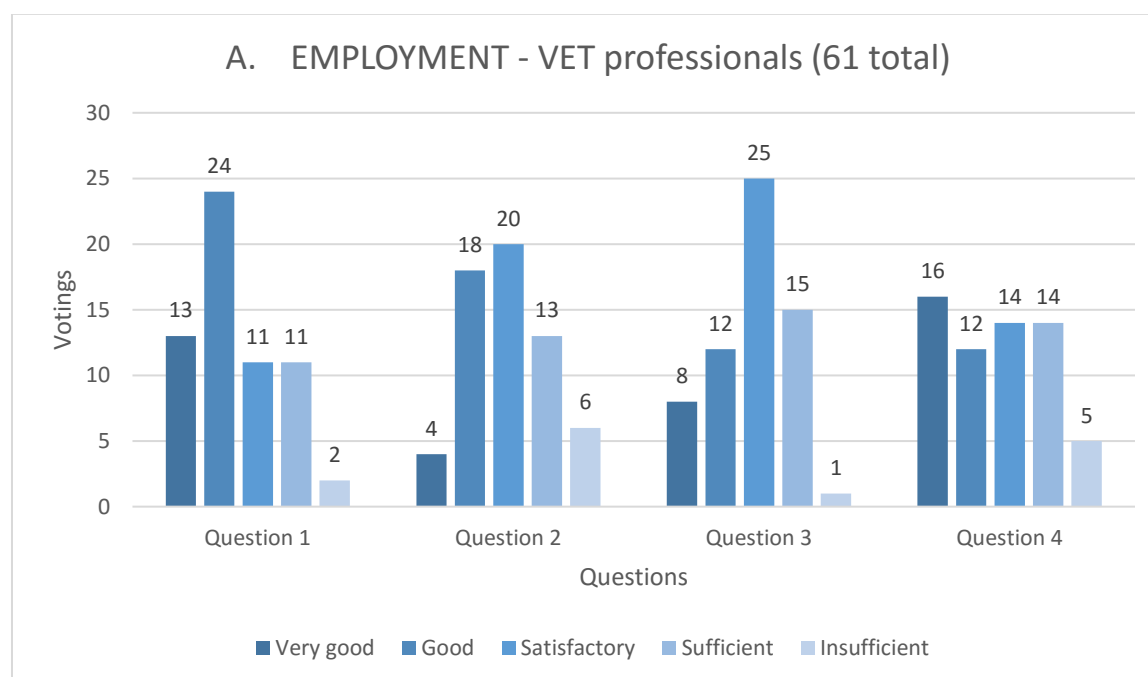
3.

3.2. Present situation of VET institutions across Europe

3.2.1. Employment

3.2.1.1. The European Perspective

This was the very first category which was answered by the VET staff of the project partnership. The general evaluation shows the following results:



A1. Can the apprentices/trainees/new workers adapt to the job requirements/job profile?

VET staff in all partner countries answers this question quite positive, as 24 people tick *good* for this question. 13 people think that it can be valued with *very good* whereas two persons value with *not sufficient*. On the other hand, *satisfactory* and *sufficient* is ticked by 11 people each.

'Their education has trained them to various task in many environments.' **FI**

'Adapting to the job requirements highly depends on motivation.' **AT**

A2. Can the apprentices/trainees/new workers identify unique selling propositions (USP) about themselves? Can they differentiate from others in order to convince?

The answers to this question show that the target group is not really well aware about how to differentiate from others in order to convince as 20 interviewees answer that the performance is only *satisfactory*. By contrast, the question is valued with *very good* by 4 people and *not sufficient* by 6. 18 people think that it is *good* whereas 13 persons value with *sufficient*.

'It also depends on their character.' **IT**

'They can but need to be trained well to be able to clearly express themselves.' **IE**

A3. Can the apprentices/trainees/new workers portray themselves and their competences professionally in front of employers?

Also, when it comes to portraying competences the majority of VET staff (25) thinks that this is only *satisfactory*. Eight people have a *very good* image and 12 persons a *good* image. Moreover, 15 people value this question with *sufficient* and one person even with *not sufficient*.

'Most of them have difficulties in doing so as they are often not aware of their competences or cannot describe them.' **ES**

'It is a question of verbal skills, in most cases. For sure, it is also a question of the educational background.' **AT**

A4. Do the apprentices/trainees/new workers have a clear understanding of the tasks/knowledge, skills, competences required by the occupation?

There is no clear trend visible when evaluating this question and the overall result is very inconsistent. *Very good* is ticked by 16, *good* by 12, *satisfactory* and *sufficient* by 14 each and *not sufficient* by five people.

'Young VET students possess lot of skills, but they are not aware of their hidden competences- at least they are not used to express them.' **FI**

'It depends a lot on the required skill level.' **BE**

3.2.1.2. Country-specific results

A1. Can the apprentices/trainees/new workers adapt to the job requirements/job profile?

In **Austria**, according to the responses of the employees the target group has difficulties in adapting to job requirements/job profile as five out of ten people rate this question with only *sufficient*. By contrast, two employees rate with *good* and three with *satisfactory*.

In **Belgium** people have a more positive approach to this question as 10 out of 10 people think that the target group can adapt in a *good* way.

The representatives of VET staff in **Finland** regard that trainees/new workers adapt to the job requirements/job profile *quite well* (8 person) or *satisfactory* (2). Most of the VET staff says that trainees/ new workers have quite a clear understanding of the tasks and knowledge required by the occupation.

100% of the staff in **Ireland** agrees that the target group can adapt in a *very good* way.

In **Italy**, a shared view is that trainees / new workers adapt to the new job requirements / job profile *easily*, in fact six participants *strongly agree* on this matter, two are *satisfied* and two say that this skill is *sufficient*. An interviewee tells that it is hard to assess since they are VET trainers and they have the possibility to evaluate students only in a class setting.

Adapting to the job profile seems to be not so good in **Spain**, as four people consider this as *satisfactory*, four as *sufficient* and two persons even as *insufficient*.

A2. Can the apprentices/trainees/new workers identify unique selling propositions (USP) about themselves? Can they differentiate from others in order to convince?

This question in **Austria** is valued as *insufficient* by 60 percent of the respondents and another 20 percent rate it as *sufficient*. Experience shows that this is a big challenge when working with the target group as they are not used to differentiate from others when it comes to work. It might be easier for some of them, as two employees have rated this question with *satisfactory*.

By six employees in **Belgium** this is answered with *satisfactory*, whereas with *good* by four.

On the other hand, the answers to the question in **Finland** about trainees unique selling propositions and their abilities to portray their competences varies from *sufficient* to *good*. Eight of the VET staff say that there is a big difference between trainees. They have difficulties to tell about their unique selling propositions and bring out their professional skills.

The **Irish** image is more positive, as four people in **Ireland** rate this question with *very good*, six people with *good* and one person with *satisfactory*.

Italian VET teachers consider trainees' ability to differentiate from other workers quite *good* (six people answered between good and satisfying, while four people stated it as *sufficient*).

Differentiating from others works *sufficiently* for four and *satisfactory* for three respondents from **Spain**. Three people have a rather *good* image about this.

A3. Can the apprentices/trainees/new workers portray themselves and their competences professionally in front of employers?

Six out of ten people in **Austria** consider this as *satisfactory*, two as *sufficient* and one person as *insufficient*. One person rates the performance with *good*, however, but realistically spoken it is hard for the target group to present themselves and their competences professionally without any constant professional training.

In **Belgium**, the interviewees have a slightly more positive picture as six people answer with *good* while four people answer with *satisfactory*.

Similar results can be achieved in **Finland** where 40 percent think that competences are portrayed in a *good* way. 30 percent think that this is done *satisfactory* and another 30 percent think this is done *sufficiently*.

80 percent in **Ireland** have a *very good* point of view concerning this question, whereas one person assesses with *good* and two people with *satisfactory*.

However, in **Italy**, trainees / new workers' capacity of portray themselves professionally in front of an employer for six people who tick *satisfactory*. For another four people the question can be answered with *sufficient*.

Spain follows this tendency as six people also rate this question with *sufficient* only, and four others with *satisfactory*.

A4. Do the apprentices/trainees/new workers have a clear understanding of the tasks/knowledge, skills, competences required by the occupation?

Again, also this question is rated quite negative according to the **Austrian** employees' experience, as three persons think that the target groups understanding of what is required by the occupation is *sufficient* and five people even value the question as *insufficient*. What is interesting is that there are

better ratings for the target group from people who work on the countryside, as there is a *good* and a *satisfactory* rating in this category.

Again, **Belgium** has rated this question as more positively, as it is *very good* for seven people and *good* for three persons.

Six of the VET staff in **Finland** note that especially young trainees/ newly graduated may not have a clear understanding of their skills, competence and knowledge. Sometimes young VET students possess lot of skills, but they are not aware of their hidden competences- at least they are not used to express them. It is easier to those who already have working experience and maybe also better understanding about themselves. The older age and previous work experience of the apprentice usually helps so that the new worker can identify his or her skills and also have better understanding of the working life in general. The younger the apprentice is the less he or she may be able to understand the requirements of a certain occupation. Usually, more mature trainees (adults) are more aware of their competences.

The **Irish** staff has a very positive attitude towards this question and therefore nine people rate with very good, one with good and another person with satisfactory.

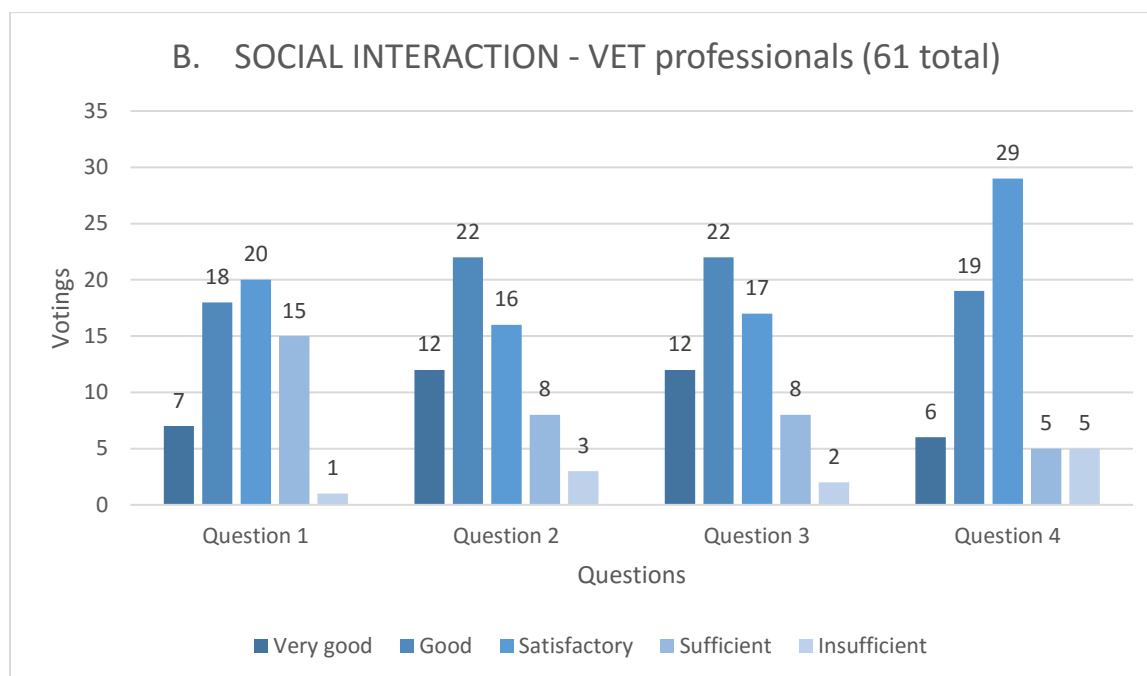
By contrast, understanding the tasks, skills and knowledge required by their occupation have been evaluated *satisfying* by six people out of ten in **Italy**. For four respondents, skills have been considered *sufficient*.

This is also confirmed by **Spain**, as 70 percent think that this is only done in a *sufficient* way. Only for 20 percent this is *satisfactory*, whereas it is *good* for 10 percent.

3.2.2. Social Interaction

3.2.2.1. The European Perspective

The second category gives the following overall results of the partnership:



B1. Do the apprentices/trainees/new workers take initiative?

Seven VET staff rate this question with *very good*, but one person as *not sufficient*. 53 interviewees rate from *good* (18) to *sufficient* (15), whereas the highest amount (20) can be found at a *satisfactory* level. In most cases it depends on the job carried out.

'Taking initiative also depends on the socio-educational background.' **AT**

'Sometimes young people avoid doing so as they are afraid of doing something wrong.' **BE**

B2. Do the apprentices/trainees/new workers seem to be openminded and willing to improve?

The majority obviously has a quite positive image, as 12 people answer with *very good*, 22 with *good* and 16 with *satisfactory*. However, eight persons think that this is only *sufficient* and even three people think it is *not sufficient*.

'A lot of them aim for self-improvement.' **FI**

'Especially teenagers are willing to improve if they see a sense in what they are doing.' **AT**

B3. Are the apprentices/trainees/new workers punctual and are willing to follow break times and working hours?

Following break times and working hours works fine for the target group all over Europe as this is valued with *good* by 22 interviewed people and *very good* by 12. There is still some improvement necessary as 17 people vote with *satisfactory* and 8 with *sufficient*. A minority of two persons rates this question with *not sufficient*.

'The use of smartphones can be a problem when following break times.' **IE**

'Sometimes getting up late in the morning does not allow to be punctual.' **AT**

B4. Are the apprentices/trainees/new workers able to co-operate and cope with feedback/criticism?

Copying with feedback and criticism seems to be a problem for young people all over Europe as more than 50 percent of the interviewed staff has a negative image about this question. It is *satisfactory* for 29 people, *sufficient* for five and *not sufficient* for two persons. By contrast 19 people think that the target group does this in a *good* and six people think in a *very good* way.

'For us Finns giving and taking feedback is not necessarily so characteristic and easy.' **FI**

'It differs how trainees cope with feedback- others co-operate and cope with feedback well, on the other hand it's difficult to some trainees.' **FI**

3.2.2.2. Country-specific results

B1. Do the apprentices/trainees/new workers take initiative?

The **Austrian** outcome shows that taking initiative is *sufficient* in most cases, as six out of ten VET staff have ticked that rating. One respondent values this as *insufficient*, whereas three people consider it as *satisfactory*. Indeed, experience shows that only a minority is willing to take initiative from the very beginning as they are not very much used to when it comes to professional life.

By contrast to the Austrian ratings the interviewees from **Belgium** rate this question with *good* (five) or *satisfactory* (five).

Half of the staff in **Finland** answers that trainees take initiative *well* or *very well*. The other half of the respondents answers that trainees take initiative *satisfactory* or *sufficiently*.

Taking initiative is considered very positive in **Ireland** as four people answer this question with *very good* and seven people with *good*.

This item has been assessed *very positively* in **Italy** (the most positive one in the whole focus group) since eight interviewees out of ten told that new workers / trainees / apprentices take initiative. Only two respondents said that they have *sufficient* skills to take initiative.

On the other hand, in **Spain**, 50 percent consider taking initiative as *satisfactory* and the other half as *sufficient*.

B2. Do the apprentices/trainees/new workers seem to be openminded and willing to improve?

In **Austria** this question is rated with *satisfactory* by seven VET staff. On the other hand, one person rates this question with *very good*, another one with *good* and a third person with *sufficient*. Honestly

spoken, the willingness to improve gets better when the target group sees a sense in what they are doing and when they receive constant positive feedback on how they are doing it.

The willingness to improve is rated with *good* by seven people and *satisfactory* by three more people in **Belgium**.

The VET staff in **Finland** has different views how trainees take initiative and how openminded and willing they are to improve. The answers vary between *sufficient* and *very good*.

Seven out of 11 people of the **Irish** staff rate this question with very good and another four people with good.

VET trainers in **Italy** are also glad about the trainees' / apprentices' open-mindedness and their wish to improve their skills since, again, eight interviewees scored it with a high mark as six answers stood between *very good* and *good*.

By contrast, four respondents rate this with *sufficient* and three people even with *not sufficient* in **Spain**. On the other hand, two persons value with *good* and one person even with *very good*.

B3. Are the apprentices/trainees/new workers punctual and are willing to follow break times and working hours?

Following work times and breaks is not a big problem for the apprentices in **Austria**. This is also confirmed by the employees of the VET sector, as two value the question as *very good*, seven as *good* and one as *satisfactory*.

Belgium provides a similar result, as following break times and working hours works *well* for six respondents and *satisfactory* for four interviewees.

Every one of the VET staff focus group in **Finland** thinks that trainees are punctual and willing to follow break times and working hours *satisfactory* or *well*.

In **Ireland**, eight employees think that the willingness to follow working hours and break times can be rated with *very good* or *good*, as rated by three people.

Punctuality and the respect of break times and working hours is considered an acquired skill by eight people- two people state *very good* and three *good*- in **Italy**.

However, the target groups performance is rated with only *sufficient* by six interviewees in **Spain**. *Not sufficient* and *satisfactory* are ticked by two people each.

B4. Are the apprentices/trainees/new workers able to co-operate and cope with feedback/criticism?

Coping with criticism is a big challenge for the **Austrian** target group, as it is hard for them to differ between criticism on a personal and on a professional level. Seven employees consider the co-operation of and the ability from the target group to cope as only *satisfactory* and two people even rate it with *sufficient*. However, there is at least one person who thinks that the target group performs in a *good* way.

In **Belgium** this question is rated with *good* and *satisfactory* by five persons each.

The VET staff in **Finland** thinks that trainees co-operate and cope with feedback *satisfactory* or *well*.

The **Irish** staff has a very positive opinion about the target groups ability to receive and handle feedback as six people consider it *as very good*, four as *good* and one person as *satisfactory*.

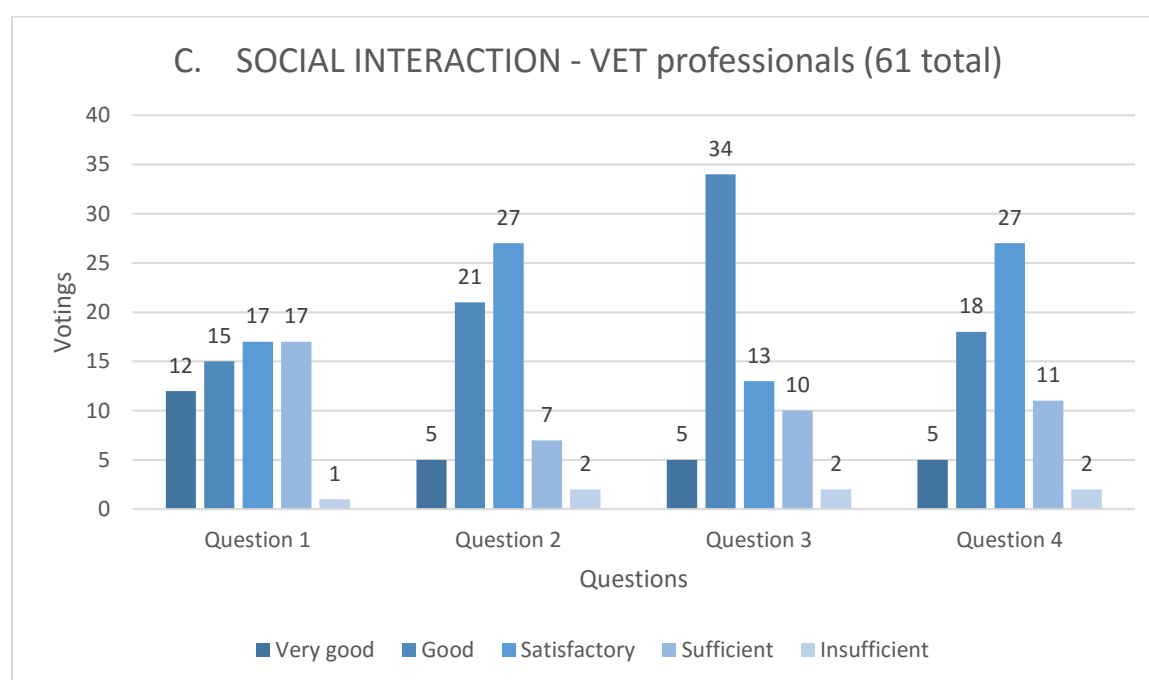
Trainees'/new workers' capacity of cooperation and coping with feedback/criticism has been evaluated *good* by four people in **Italy** and *satisfying* by six people. So, in general, it is considered that new workers are enough skilled on this matter and that criticism is used in a constructive way; however, a participant told that it depends on the age of the new worker/trainee, and another one said that in his opinion a lot depends on the attitude, the internship related-subject skills and the basic skills of the person involved.

Spain's evaluation has a more negative trend as two respondents rate with *not sufficient*, three with *sufficient* and four with *satisfactory*. Copying with feedback and criticism is considered *good* by at least one person.

3.2.3. Self-Perception

3.2.3.1. The European Perspective

The general evaluation of the project partnership provides the following data:



C1. Do the apprentices/trainees/new workers ask questions when they are unsure? Are they afraid of admitting uncertainty?

One person thinks that this is *not sufficient*. The other 60 interviewees are very inconsistent about this question. 12 people rate with *very good* and 15 with *good*. *Satisfactory* and *sufficient* are rated by 17 people each.

'Asking question works fine, whereas admitting uncertainty does not as some are afraid of losing face in front of others.' **AT**

'It is better to ask twice before doing something wrong.' **IT**

C2. Do the apprentices/trainees/new workers seem aware of their own strengths and weaknesses?

A clear trend can be seen in the rating of this question as 21 people think it is *good* and 27 persons think it is *satisfactory*. It is *not sufficient* for 2 and only *sufficient* for seven VET staff. Five of them have a very good image about this question.

'In Finland it is more general to underestimate own skills, but there are converse cases too. It is a bit suspicious if someone implies he or she is a master of everything, especially right in the beginning.' **FI**

'Defining strengths and weaknesses and finding examples for these is always a challenge, especially for strengths.' **AT**

C3. Can the apprentices/trainees/new workers clearly express what they like and dislike about the tasks and profession?

More than 50 percent (34) think that this is done in *good* way and even five people think that it is done in a *very good* way. Three people value this question with *not sufficient*. However, it is *sufficient* for ten and *satisfactory* for 13 people.

'They say what they think about many things concerning their job'. **FI**

'The majority is not able to do so.' **ES**

C4. Are the apprentices/trainees/new workers able to estimate their own abilities realistically?

Estimating the own abilities realistically is *satisfactory* for 27 interviewees and *good* for another 18. It is *sufficient* for 11, but *not sufficient* for 2 persons. For 3 people it is even *very good*.

'Some of them overestimate themselves which can be a problem at work.' **ES**

'They can do so quite well but need continuous support to do so.' **IE**

3.2.3.2. Country-specific results

C1. Do the apprentices/trainees/new workers ask questions when they are unsure? Are they afraid of admitting uncertainty?

Austria has found out that admitting uncertainty seems to be another challenge for the target group. Three out of ten employees think that this is only *satisfactory* and another six even consider this as *sufficient*. One respondent rates this with *insufficient*. In fact, according to the experience of the VET staff, the target group is afraid to lose face when admitting uncertainty or asking questions when they are unsure. This counts for the clear majority.

The target groups performance seems to be better in **Belgium**, as it is rated with *good* by four and *satisfactory* by six people.

Most of the VET staff in **Finland**- seven people- think that trainees ask questions when they are unsure *well* or *very well*. Only three of the them think that trainees ask questions when they are unsure *satisfactory* or *sufficiently*. They also say that there are always some trainees who are insecure of themselves and are too shy to ask. They may also underestimate their abilities. Most of the trainees ask because they want to improve and learn new skills and talents.

In **Ireland**, six out of 11 people give a *very good* feedback about this question and five people rate with *good*.

Four **Italian** VET trainers / teachers say that new workers / trainees demonstrate *very good* capacity to admit uncertainty or to ask questions when they are unsure. By contrast, five participants say that this skill is *satisfying*. Therefore, this aspect seems to be a bit in contrast with what companies' representatives thought.

Finally, the target groups performance on this matter seems to be *sufficient* for eight interviewees and *satisfactory* for another two in **Spain**.

C2. Do the apprentices/trainees/new workers seem aware of their own strengths and weaknesses?

This question is rated in **Austria** with *satisfactory* by six people, whereas two have a *good* image and another two consider the target groups awareness as *not sufficient*. To be true, the average was not trained very well in being aware of own strengths and weaknesses and this process mostly starts when they enter VET education and even then, requires constant training.

60 percent of the respondents in **Belgium** think that this question can be answered with *satisfactory* whereas the rest values this with *good*.

Additionally, in **Finland**, most of the VET staff (seven) thought that trainees/new workers seem to be aware of their own strengths and weaknesses *satisfactory* or *sufficiently*. Only few of the respondents thought that trainees are quite *well* aware of their own strengths and weaknesses. Many estimate their skills worse than the skills are. The trainees might also need help to find their strengths and weaknesses.

Being aware of strengths and weaknesses is considered *very good* by three persons, *good* by seven people and *satisfactory* by one person in **Ireland**.

Trainees awareness of their strengths and weaknesses is assessed between *good* and *satisfying* by nine people in **Italy**. However, five people agree on the fact that this is rather *satisfying*.

As reported by **Spain**, five interviewees think that this is *sufficient*. Three others agree that it is *satisfactory*, whereas one respondent rates with *good* and one person with *very good*.

C3. Can the apprentices/trainees/new workers clearly express what they like and dislike about the tasks and profession?

Seven out of ten people from the **Austrian** VET sector rates this question with good, one person with very good, one with satisfactory and one other with sufficient. Although it seems sometimes hard to really name the likes and dislikes, it is usually manageable by the target group.

In **Belgium** the picture is more consistent as the answers are split in half and range from *good* to *satisfactory*.

Most of the VET staff in **Finland** thinks that trainees can express these things well or very well.

10 out of 11 people in **Ireland** think that the target groups expressing of likes and dislikes is good. Additionally, one person thinks this is satisfactory.

In **Italy**, agreement has not been reached for the third item of this cluster as five respondents said that trainees *clearly state* what they like and dislike about their tasks and profession, while four participants told this skill is *satisfying*, and one person rated it as *insufficient*.

Also, **Spain** does not reach agreement concerning this question, as *very good* is ticked by one, *good* by two and *sufficient* by four persons. Three people even think that this is *insufficient*.

C4. Are the apprentices/trainees/new workers able to estimate their own abilities realistically?

In **Austria**, estimating their own abilities realistically works *satisfactory* for the target group according to the opinions of five employees. Two of them rate the question with *good*. Here, too, there is an urban-rural gradient, as one employee from the urban area has rated with *sufficient* and two with *insufficient*. A reason for that could be that there are more options in urban areas, so it could be hard for an urban target group to filter these appropriately and quickly.

On the other hand, seven out of ten respondents in **Belgium** think that this is *satisfactory* and for another three people it is even *good*.

Seven VET staff in **Finland** think that trainees are not able to estimate their own abilities realistically, only *satisfactory* or *sufficiently*.

In **Ireland**, estimating the own abilities realistically seems to work out *very good* for three interviewees, *good* for another five ones and *satisfactory* for another three interviewed persons.

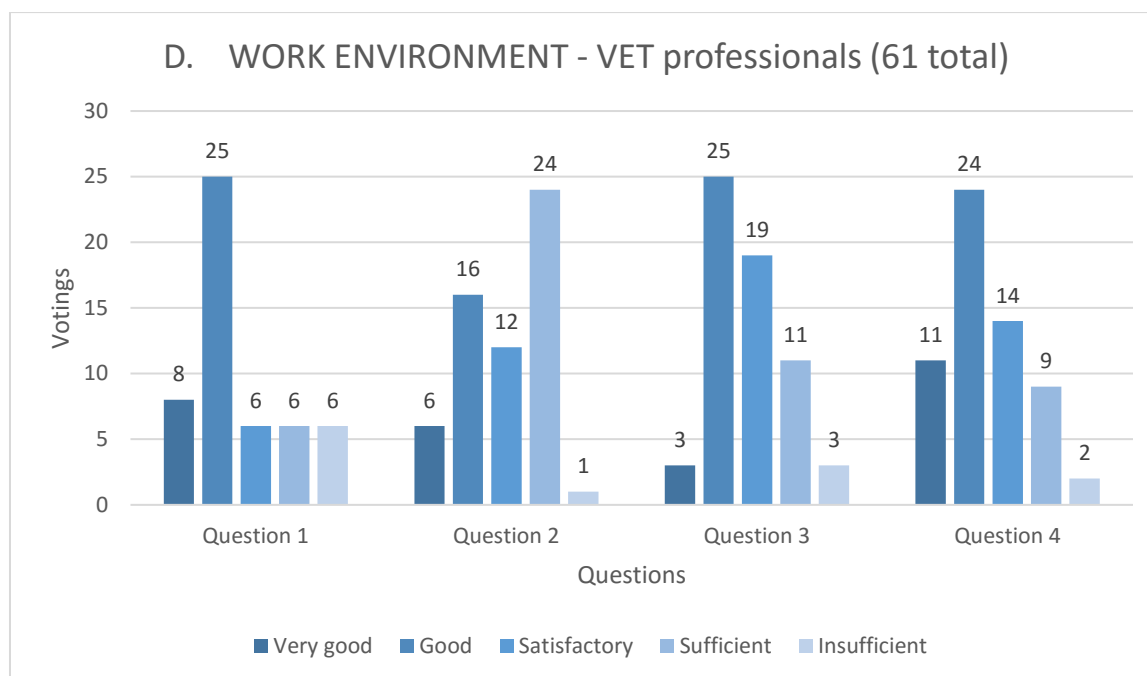
Most interviewees in **Italy** show a medium-low assessment on trainees'/ apprentices 'capacity to estimate their own abilities realistically: apart from three *good*, answers have been four *satisfying* and three *sufficient*. A participant added again that a lot depends on the attitude, internship related-subject skills and basic skills of the person involved.

Estimating their own possibilities seems to be a challenge for the **Spanish** target group, too, as this is valued with *sufficient* by four and *satisfactory* by another four people. Only two respondents think it is *good*.

3.2.4. Work Environment

3.2.4.1. The European Perspective

By evaluating the overall results of the project partners, the following is obvious:



D1. Are the apprentices/trainees/new workers capable of dealing with the demands of the physical environment (height, heat, cold, noise, isolation,)?

For most of the people interviewed across Europe the target group can cope with the physical demands in a *good* way as for 25 interviewees. Eight consider this even *very good*. By contrast, six people think this is done *satisfactory*, whereas another six think it is *sufficient* and another six think this is *insufficient*.

'Sometimes it's the parents who worry more about the demands than their children.' **AT**

'Dealing with the physical demands at work mostly works fine.' **IT**

D2. Do the apprentices/trainees/new workers have a realistic understanding of the demands of the workplace?

This question is rated rather negatively by one group of the respondents. 24 people respond with *sufficient* and one person with *not sufficient*. On the other hand, 16 people respond with *good* and 12 with *satisfactory* and six people even with *very good*.

'They do know the demands of the workplace, but many times there are some misbehavior in their actual routines (cell phones, timetables, commitment to work).' **FI**

'A lot of them do not have, because they are either not interested or not informed very well.' **ES**

D3. Do the apprentices/trainees/new workers recognise and adapt to the values of the company?

Adapting to the values of the companies seems to work fine for the target group as 25 respondents tick this question with *good*, 19 with *satisfactory* and three with *very good*. However, there seems to be improvement for 11 people who tick *sufficient* and for three who tick *not sufficient*.

'The values of the companies can be difficult to get to know.' **FI**

'The adaption of values of the company depends on the values of the person in question and how these two match'. **FI**

D4. Do the apprentices/trainees/new workers interact with customers appropriately and in a good manner?

More than 50 percent agree that interaction with customers is done in a *very good*-11- or *good* way-24. 14 interviewees consider this as *satisfactory*. It is only *sufficient* for nine and *not sufficient* for three people.

'Once people get rid of being shy interacting with customers works quite well. However, it is important that this is trained practically and that there is a good and open communication with companies where internships are done.' **AT**

'Customer service skills are not as natural to all, but everyone can improve their skills as they gain more experience and self- confidence.' **FI**

3.2.4.2. Country-specific results

D1. Are the apprentices/trainees/new workers capable of dealing with the demands of the physical environment (height, heat, cold, noise, isolation,)?

The **Austrian** target groups capability of dealing with the physical environment seems to be *good* according to seven respondents from the VET sector. One person considers this *very good*, whereas two rate it with *satisfactory*.

Belgium has similar results as six persons answer this question with *good*, five with *satisfactory* and one with *sufficient*.

Also, in **Finland** most of the participants (eight) answer that trainees/ new workers deal with the demands of the physical environment *well* or *very well*. Mostly they understand the demand - they know their tasks.

In **Ireland**, six employees rate this question with *very good*, four with *good* and one person with *satisfactory*.

According to VET teachers/trainer's opinion in **Italy**, eight out of ten, trainees/new workers are *overall able* to deal with the demands of the physical environment. Surprisingly, two teachers consider this skill *insufficient*, however they prefer not to comment their rate.

Dealing with the demands of the physical environment is rated very bad in **Spain** by most of the respondents. Four say it is *not sufficient*, five say it is *sufficient* and only one person thinks it is *satisfactory*.

D2. Do the apprentices/trainees/new workers have a realistic understanding of the demands of the workplace?

In **Austria**, when it comes to a realistic understanding of the demands of the workplace, this is valued as only *sufficient* by seven employees. It is true, that in most cases the ideas do not correspond with reality. However, this also depends on the work carried out, therefore this question is rated with *good* by one respondent.

For 20 percent this question is only ratable with *sufficient*, whereas another 20 percent rate with *satisfactory*, while the majority rates with *good* in **Belgium**.

Half of the participants in **Finland** thinks that trainees/ new workers have realistic view of the demands of the environment. The other half of the participants wrote that trainees/ new workers have satisfactory or sufficient understanding of the demands of the workplace.

In **Ireland**, six employees rate this question with very good, four with good and one person with satisfactory.

Trainees' / new workers' realistic understanding of the demands of the workplace has been evaluated pretty negatively (the most negative one in the whole focus group) in **Italy**. In fact, eight people rated this skill as sufficient, while two teachers preferred not to answer. In general, this answer seems to be even more negative than the one provided by companies' representatives.

Spain follows this trend as it is *sufficient* for six people and *insufficient* for one person. Another three report it is *satisfactory*.

D3. Do the apprentices/trainees/new workers recognise and adapt to the values of the company?

In **Austria**, this area is valued quite positive throughout, and according to the experience of seven VET staff the target group recognizes and adapts to companies' values in a good way. Three of the respondents answer that this is satisfactory.

According to the evaluation of this question the target group in **Belgium** can adapt to and recognize the values of the company quite well as seven people vote with *good* and three with *satisfactory*.

The half of the **Finnish** VET staff answers that trainees/new workers adapt to the values of the company *well*. The other half thinks that trainees/new workers adapt to the values of the company *satisfactory* or *sufficiently*.

Six interviewees in **Ireland** rate this question with *good*, whereas three people rate with *very good* and two people with *satisfactory*.

According to VET trainers involved in the **Italian** focus group, new workers and trainees can recognize and adapt to the values of the company, although most respondents state *satisfying*, and four of them consider this skill as *sufficient*.

Spain has similar results as it is *sufficient* for five people and *satisfactory* for three. On the other hand, 20 percent say it is *insufficient*.

D4. Do the apprentices/trainees/new workers interact with customers appropriately and in a good manner?

The **Austrian** target groups interaction with customers is rated with *good* by 90 percent of the employees and even *very good* by 10 percent. In fact, interacting positively is fairly easy for the target group, as they are used to that, most likely because of social media and/or to further their own self esteem.

Belgium provides nearly the same results as 70 percent think that this is done in a *good* way and for another 30 percent it is *satisfactory*.

In **Finland** most of the VET staff thinks that trainees/ new workers interact with customers *well*. The trainees have mostly good manners. They behave politely with clients/customers and colleagues. Only few of the participants answered that trainees/new workers interact with customers *satisfactory* or *sufficiently*.

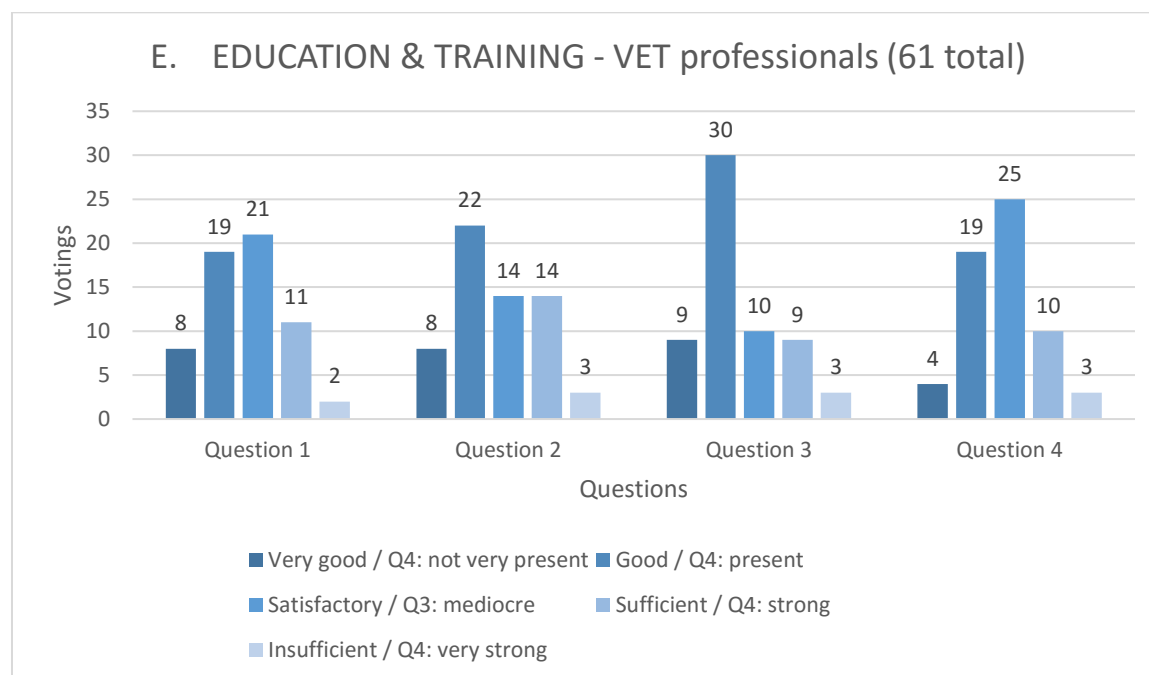
Most of the staff from **Ireland**-nine people-think that the target group interact very good and two people assess with good.

Also, the appropriateness of interaction with customers has been assessed by most participants in **Italy** as a *satisfying* skill. However, one person prefers to rate this *insufficiently*.

By contrast, this skill is *sufficient* for five people in **Spain** and even *insufficient* for two others. However, it is *satisfactory* for three people.

3.2.5. Education and Training

3.2.5.1. The European Perspective



E1. Do the apprentices/trainees/new workers have sufficient language skills to carry out their work properly? This includes both oral and/or written skills depending on the job tasks.

Two respondents say that the language skills are *not sufficient*, and they are only *sufficient* for eleven. By contrast, 21 people assess the language skills as *satisfactory* and 19 as *good*. For eight interviewed people they are even *very good*.

'Trainees vary very much: some have sufficient language skills, some very good and some are lacking these skills.' **FI**

'The oral language skills are usually good, but the written are always not. There is always lot of vocabulary you have to learn in certain fields. Also, young people use a different language than older people and sometimes that might cause misunderstandings.' **FI**

E2. Do the apprentices/trainees/new workers possess and demonstrate sufficient digital skills?

Based on the evaluation of the survey, this question is answered with *good* by 22 interviewees and *very good* by eight. They are *satisfactory* and *sufficient* for 14 people each and for three people digital skills are *insufficient*.

'Digital skills are good when considering for example use of social media, but often there can be gaps in digital skills concerning the use of MS Office tools or other digital systems that are part of the work environment.' **FI**

'Many times, digital skills are focused only in social media and gaming.' **IE**

E3. Are the apprentices/trainees/new workers willing to improve their occupational specific knowledge and skills?

39 respondents value this question with either *very good*-9 people- or *good*-30 people. On the other hand, ten respondents think that the willingness is *satisfactory* and for nine it is only *sufficient*. Three people have a rather negative image and therefore rate with *not sufficient*.

'Most of them are willing to improve their occupational knowledge and skills.' **FI**

'Sometimes they hinder themselves, but most of them succeeds in the end.' **BE**

E4. Do the apprentices/trainees/new workers have any skill gaps that hinder their performances?

Skills gaps are considered *mediocre* by 25 interviewees whereas 19 persons think that skill gaps are *present*. Four people think that there are *not so many* skill gaps, but for ten people skill gaps are *hindering* or *very hindering*, as for three.

'The greatest gap is with the initiative.' **FI**

'According to my experience if the vocational course is of good level, trainees receive an adequate technical background, obviously improved with the experience in the field but good enough as a starting point. It is necessary that the course foresees many hours of technical and practical preparation through exercises, simulations, role-play, work on cases and for this you need experienced teachers working in the specific field.' **IT**

3.2.5.2. Country-specific results

E1. Do the apprentices/trainees/new workers have sufficient language skills to carry out their work properly? This includes both oral and/or written skills depending on the job tasks.

Half of the **Austrian** respondents have ticked *satisfactory* for this question. To which extent written skills are necessary depends the required tasks. Two people consider the language skills as *good*, another two as *sufficient* and one person as *very good*.

Most of the interviewees in **Belgium**, six out of ten people, consider this as *good* whilst four as *satisfactory*.

For 50 percent in **Finland**, language skills are *good*, whereas for another 50 percent these are *satisfactory* to *sufficient*. Few of the respondents mentioned the trainees with a migration background. They might have difficulties in language skills.

Seven out of 11 interviewed people in **Ireland** think that this question can be valued with *very good* and two with *good*. Another two persons rate with *satisfactory*.

Trainees ‘/new workers’ sufficient language skills to carry on their work properly is rated by six people between “good” and “satisfying”, while four people consider it as a sufficient skill in **Italy**.

The ratings in **Spain** range from *good* to *not sufficient*. *Very good* is only ticked by one person and *not sufficient* by two people. The majority decides on *satisfactory*- four people-, or *sufficient*- three people.

E2. Do the apprentices/trainees/new workers possess and demonstrate sufficient digital skills?

In **Austria**, 60 percent of the VET staff reports that possessing and demonstrating sufficient digital skills is *sufficient*, whereas 10 percent report these as *very good* and 10 percent as *satisfactory*. 20 percent consider these as *good*.

A contrary result is provided by **Belgium** as 80 percent do think that the target group has *good* digital skills, and these are also *satisfactory* for the other 20 percent.

Most of the participants in **Finland**, namely 70 percent, think that trainees have *good* digital skills. 30 percent express that trainees/new workers digital skills are *satisfactory*.

Five people in **Ireland** say that the participants have *very good* digital skills, four say that these are *good*, and two people consider them as *satisfactory*.

According to two VET teachers in **Italy**, demonstration of digital skills looks *very good*, while six people consider it *satisfying*. Overall, it has been assessed as an appreciated skill.

Digital skills seem to be a barrier in **Spain**, as only one person thinks that these are *good*. On the other hand, six people consider these as *sufficient* and three people as *insufficient*.

E3. Are the apprentices/trainees/new workers willing to improve their occupational specific knowledge and skills?

The **Austrian** answers can be divided into two groups: on the one hand, five out of ten respondents value with *good* and one with *satisfactory*, whereas four people have different experiences and therefore value with *sufficient*.

Belgium, on the other hand, states that nine interviewees regard this as *good* and only one person as *satisfactory*.

Almost all (eight) of the **Finnish** VET staff answered that trainees/new workers are willing to improve their occupational specific knowledge and skills.

In **Ireland**, almost all except for three people who assess with *good*, rate this question with *very good*.

All participants in **Italy** agree on the fact that new workers/trainees are willing to improve their occupational specific knowledge and skills in a rather *satisfying* way. In fact, four of them answer *good* while six people rate it as *satisfying*.

Compared to Italy, the situation is different in **Spain**, as five people value the willingness with *sufficient* and three people with *insufficient*. It is only *good* and *satisfactory* for one person each.

E4. Do the apprentices/trainees/new workers have any skill gaps that hinder their performances?

In **Austria**, six employees report that obvious skill gaps are *mediocre*, one employee thinks that there are *not so many* skill gaps. However, for three other people these are *very present*.

In **Belgium**, two people think that skill gaps are *mediocre*, whereas eight other people think that skills gaps are *not very present*.

Most of the **Finnish** VET staff, namely eight people, state that skill gaps are *present* or *very present*.

Skill gaps are also *present* in **Ireland** and therefore rated with *strongly present* to *present* by most of the interviewed staff.

Four people in **Italy** say this gap is *mediocre*, four participants consider this skill as *present* and two persons rate it as *very present*. Therefore, it appears that skill gaps may hinder trainees/new workers performances and that, according to VET teachers, this gap must be reduced before an internship takes place. A participant, anyway, highlights that several factors may hinder trainees' performance. Furthermore, two participants state that trainees have skill gaps.

For four respondents in **Spain** skill gaps are *not that present* and one person thinks that are nearly *no gaps* at all. However, three people agree that these are *present* or *very present* as stated by two persons.

3.2.6. Conclusion

The overall results and moreover the comparison of the country-specific results provided by employees who work in the VET sector has turned out very interestingly. The following aspects are obvious:

➤ North-South-Divide

The evaluation of the country-specific questionnaires and the additional comments produced an interesting picture which could not have been expected before. Apparently, there is a north-south divide in the views of the interviewed employees in the VET sector. This is based on the fact that the institutions have a more positive picture of their participants the further north one moves. What could be the possible reasons for this?

On the one hand it has to be mentioned that the VET institutions within the project partnership have different backgrounds or focus on different areas. The length of stay of the participants in VET institutions before they enter the first labour market probably also plays a role in the overall picture per country.

It is unlikely that one can deduct from this observation that the experts in the VET field in southern countries - Austria with its geographical position in Central Europe - simply judge 'more strictly'. It is also unlikely that trainees in southern countries are 'more difficult' than in Ireland or Finland, for example.

Looking at the above-mentioned backgrounds, in the case of Austria one can definitely say that the answers also come from those who work in 'Supra-Company-Apprenticeship Training prolongable / partially qualification'. Since the target group here is more challenging for trainers, this certainly contributes to a country-specific picture.

In general, with regard to the European context, it can be said that the target group has changed over the last few years in all countries to the extent that it has become more challenging overall. These challenges are compounded on the one hand by intensified social environments, but on the other hand also by larger educational gaps with regard to the general school qualifications acquired in the formal school system.

Furthermore, it seems that the geographical location of the individual VET providers of the DITOGA project also plays a role, as does whether they are located in a conurbation, a rural area or a small town. All these factors may contribute to the observation of a north-south divide, and it would certainly be interesting to explore this context further.

➤ **Language gaps**

The evaluation of the survey results also revealed that the target group of the survey has greater language deficits in some countries than in others. It is obvious that Ireland has the lowest language deficits and that the project partner Spain - due to its situation in the Basque Country - also seems to have less problems with this. Belgium and Finland occupy a relatively neutral position with regard to the language deficits of training participants or graduates. According to the survey and comments, Austria and Italy have the greatest problems. A general difference has to be made when it comes to the cultural backgrounds of the graduates: of course, it is the case that native youths also have language difficulties in both the oral and written spheres because of their social environment, whether they come from families with little education or because of their previous school education.

Another reason for these increased observations in certain countries may be that this has to do with migratory flows in the past. Here the picture seems to have changed since the flow of refugees to certain project countries, such as Italy and Austria. Ireland has been relatively strongly excluded here, and Finland, too, does not have too many people with a migrant background in comparison. Also, parts of Spain were not the target of many people. These facts should also be taken into account when interpreting the questionnaires. It also seems that English as a world language is easier to handle for people with a migration background than, for example, German, Italian, French or Finnish.

Additionally, one must not forget that there is a certain language barrier, as a completely unknown language and letter system is difficult to learn. Also, our European education system and the validation of skills and competences is different compared to other countries.

➤ **Difference between urban and rural areas**

As mentioned above, there is a general difference between conurbations and more rural areas. This also seems to affect the performance of the participants. As can be seen from the country-specific evaluation and the additional comments, the willingness of VET graduates to perform better seems to be more negative in metropolitan areas than in smaller geographical contexts. Perhaps this has to do with the fact that it is more difficult to find a suitable job in the countryside than in the city, because

there are simply more opportunities there. This may also reduce the willingness in metropolitan areas to give ones best, as there are more career alternatives and more companies from the same sector than in rural areas. Another reason may be that the quality of schools in rural areas seems to be better than in the city, and therefore possible knowledge gaps of the participants are smaller.

➤ **Code of conduct**

As far as the general adherence to rules is concerned, according to the survey results, the northern project partners again seem to have a better role than those in Central and Southern Europe. What is the reason for this? Perhaps it is because more emphasis is placed on formal and polite practices. A simple example: in Ireland, as in other Commonwealth countries and the USA, it is common to queue up for something. Shift this scenario to Central or Southern Europe.

➤ **Demand of soft skills**

A major topic common to all project partners is the need to train or continuously improve the soft skills of participants in vocational training institutions. There is an increased need here. It could be observed that a lack of soft skills is a serious obstacle for a constant future employment relationship on the first and second labour market for many training participants or graduates. Unfortunately, most of the participants themselves are not aware of this fact.

Even though all VET institutions involved in the DITOGA project attach great importance to the development and application of soft skills, these are sometimes the greatest deficits if one disregards formally acquired competences and practical work experience.

Soft skills do not only mean highly developed skills, such as suitable conflict management or team building, but also simple basics, such as appropriate, respectful and polite behaviour towards other people, punctuality and generally applicable social norms.

The lack of these is also one of the reasons why the project partnership has paid great attention to soft skills in the development of future training content for VET institutions and training centres.

➤ **The value of work**

It is noticeable that work has a different status within the target group and is lived by some accordingly. This of course makes it more difficult to work with young adults, regardless of whether they are in training or have already graduated, and subsequently affects not only VET institutions, but also companies or future employers. Possible reasons for a perhaps lower significance of the factor labour could be:

- work is seen only as a source of money, not as part of the self-realisation that is sought
- the social environment or the parental home play an important role in many cases
- as is already known, education is often inherited in many cases

A mandate already implemented by VET institutions is therefore to increase the value of work for young adults in order to prepare them well for their future careers, but also to keep the drop-out rate low. In this respect, the training institutions definitely need to pay further attention to this factor.

➤ **The importance of practical training**

The country-specific and overall results have shown that practical experience in the respective occupations is enormously important and this factor should not be underestimated. On the one hand, this is important in order to retain well-trained skilled workers for the future and to keep the respective economy competitive and at a good level. On the other hand, it is understandable that practical work

in companies also helps to define possible skill gaps, which in turn enables training institutions to adapt their training content both practically and theoretically. Fortunately, this is not only implemented by the participating project partners, but also by many other VET institutions. Nevertheless, it is important to recall this aspect.

➤ **Motivation**

As far as the keyword 'motivation' is concerned, the following results have also crystallized in the project partnership:

Motivation depends on one's own understanding of the meaningfulness of what one does. In many cases, young people - trainees and graduates - must first be given this sense of meaning. Of course, this also requires a high degree of self-reflection and work on oneself.

Not existing or only small motivation is on also an expression of a pronounced perspective-lessness. Here it is important that good perspectives and possibly also alternatives are professionally developed within the training context. But it is also a fact here that the participants must also become aware of their responsibility and that they are the ones who have a major part to play. VET institutions can only ever be supportive and open doors - the respective participant has to pass through them.

Motivation is always influenced by the environment. Many young people in the target group have a more or less pronounced, sometimes complicated or even dramatic history. This can sometimes make it difficult to find the right motivation - whether intrinsic or extrinsic. Motivation is increased by success experiences, in addition, the leaving of the own comfort zone.

Consequently, the project partnership also paid great attention to possible motivational factors.

➤ **Critical faculties**

Another important aspect that emerged from the evaluation of the questionnaires and the comments was the partially inadequate ability of the target group to deal appropriately with feedback and criticism. Criticism is mostly perceived as criticism of one's own person, but not of the way one works. This is certainly not seen or perceived as a possible improvement approach.

It is conspicuous that the weakly pronounced ability to deal appropriately with criticism results from one's own uncertainty. The role of the new media, such as Facebook, Instagram and snapchat, is certainly interesting here, with the latter currently being used by the majority of the target group. What all new media have in common is that you are evaluated, and this actually follows a classic black-and-white thinking, without taking any grayscale into account. In classic Facebook jargon, there's only the thumb up or down. This circumstance certainly affects the criticism behavior of the target group and may also explain why criticism is often felt only on a personal level. Here there is an increasing need for appropriate sensitization measures on the part of the VET institutions in order to support their participants or graduates in becoming more capable of criticism and to see criticism as an opportunity.

➤ **Professional goal setting**

A good goal - whether short, medium or long term - is a premise with which the different education providers are already working. This is essential for a successful start in working life and good progress in the further professional future.

Many young adults in the target group are not used to setting their own goals or are unable to do so for various reasons, for example because they have never learned to do so or because it was not

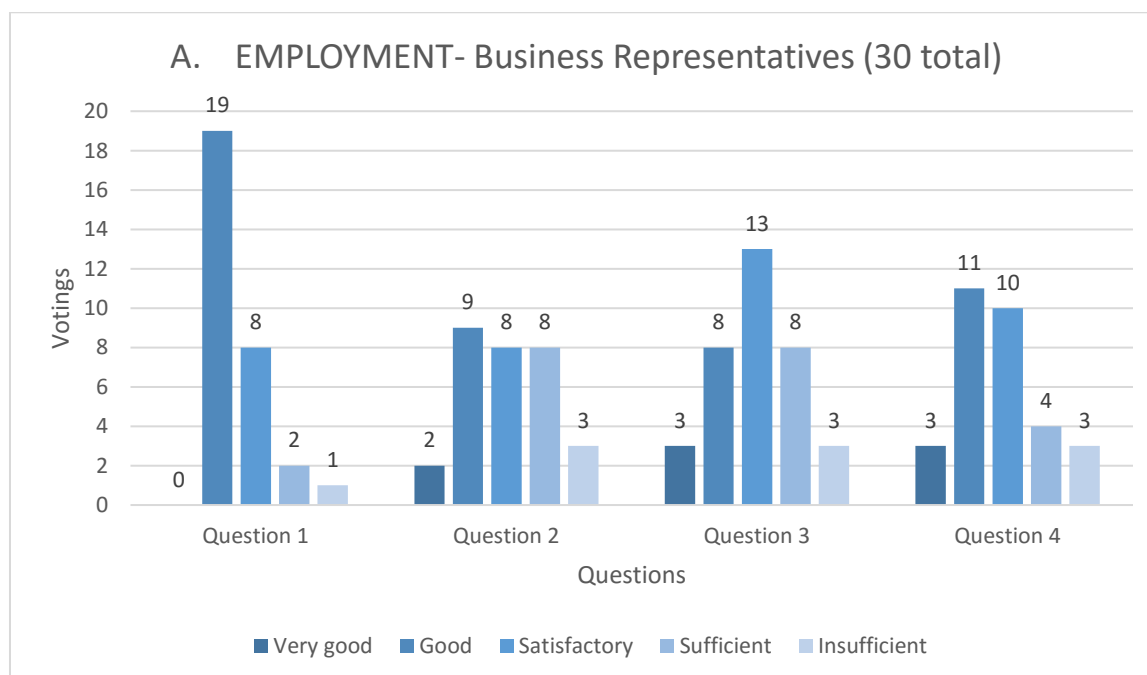
important. This is of course also a challenge for training institutions, which needs time and may be accompanied by setbacks. It was therefore also important for the project partnership to shed light on the professional goal setting and to develop possible approaches.

In summary, it can be said that all participating VET institutions and training institutions are already doing a lot to give the participants and graduates a good start into working life and to qualify them in the best possible way. The results of the questionnaires made it even clearer where there is still a need to catch up. These results and analyses should also provide other training institutions with lasting support in readjusting their curricula and training content.

3.3. Demands of the world of work beyond the educational horizon

3.3.1. Employment

3.3.1.1. The European Perspective



A1. Can the apprentices/trainees/new workers adapt to the job requirements/job profile?

According to the evaluation of the answers from the businesses representatives adapting to the job requirements works well for the target group, as 19 interviewees tick *good* and eight *satisfactory*. A minority of two people, however, tick *not sufficient* and one person ticks *sufficient*.

'The trainees can't always think what kind of tasks is required to do in a certain job'. FI

'The most important point is that trainees understand why they should adapt.' ES

A2. Can the apprentices/trainees/new workers identify unique selling propositions (USP) about themselves? Can they differentiate from others in order to convince?

The evaluation across Europe reveals that one third- 11 people- rates between *very good* and *good*. For two people it is *very good* and *good* for nine. By contrast, another third has a more negative image, as eight people rate with *sufficient* and three people with *insufficient*. Eight people give an average rating of *satisfactory*.

'Trainees adapt to the job requirements well. They identify their unique selling propositions quite well. Trainees portray themselves and their competences well. Some trainees have a clear understanding of the skills and competences, but others have not' FI

'Students and trainees definitely need to be trained on that.' BE

A3. Can the apprentices/trainees/new workers portray themselves and their competences professionally in front of employers?

The portraying of the target group works in a *very good* way for three people and in a *good* way for eight persons. 13 business representatives state that this is *satisfactory*, but it is only *sufficient* for another eight and even *insufficient* for three persons.

'It usually works fine for the majority.' IE

'This is something that would require training in schools, as it is only done sporadically.' AT

A4. Do the apprentices/trainees/new workers have a clear understanding of the tasks/knowledge, skills, competences required by the occupation?

Concerning this question, it turns out that there is an average rating of *satisfactory* as ten people state. *Good* is answered by 11 people, whereas *very good* by three, *sufficient* by four and *insufficient* by two people.

'It would be important that students could tell me more about their skills.' FI

'In general, most of them tend to only have a vague image, but it gets better when they work.' BE

3.3.1.2. Country-specific results

A1. Can the apprentices/trainees/new workers adapt to the job requirements/job profile?

The respondents from the economic sector in **Austria** mainly rate the apprentices/trainees/new workers ability to adapt to the job requirements/job profile in a positive way- four as *good*, one as *satisfactory*.

Belgium has similar results, as two people rate with *good*, two with *satisfactory* and one with *sufficient*.

The respondents in **Finland** answer that trainees/new workers adapt to the job requirements/job profile *well* or *satisfactory*.

Ireland has similar results, as four respondents say that the target group can adapt *well*, and one respondents say even *very well*.

In **Italy**, in general, interviewees agree on the fact that trainees adapt to the new job requirements / job profile quite well as four people state *good* and one states *satisfying* to this question.

The results in **Spain** are as follows: two companies think that this is done in a *very good* way, whereas two others rate with *sufficient*. One company says that this is *satisfactory*.

A2. Can the apprentices/trainees/new workers identify unique selling propositions (USP) about themselves? Can they differentiate from others in order to convince?

Business are quite positive about this question in **Austria** as performances are *satisfactory* for three and *good* for one company. However, one international company responds quite negative to this category and rates the target groups performance with *insufficient*.

The **Belgian** representatives are more positive about this question and therefore two persons rate with *good* and three with *satisfactory*.

In **Finland**, two of the interviewees answered that trainees/ new workers have good unique selling propositions. Three of them thought that trainees can't identify USP enough.

Differentiating from others seems to work fine in **Ireland**, as two people answer this question with *good*, tow others with *satisfactory*, but for one person it is *not sufficient*.

Additionally, in **Italy**, new workers / trainees do not look much able to differentiate from other workers, therefore they seem not to be able to brand themselves in a convincing manner. Consequently, this question is answered with *sufficient* by four and *good* by one person.

Finally, the results are also incoherent in **Spain**, as two interviewees answer this question with *insufficient*. There is one voting for *very good*, *good* and *satisfactory*, on the other hand.

A3. Can the apprentices/trainees/new workers portray themselves and their competences professionally in front of employers?

In **Austria** one company answers this question with *insufficient*, whereas small and medium sized companies have a more positive image on how the target group portrays themselves and their competences, namely three as *satisfactory* and one as *good*.

Additionally, respondents in **Belgium** value this with *good* and *satisfactory*, two people each. They are portrayed *sufficiently* for one person, though.

The **Finnish** respondents have also different thoughts about the question can the trainees/ new workers portray themselves and their competences professionally in front of employers. The answers vary between *good* and *not sufficient*.

There are similar results in **Ireland**, as two people think that this is *very good*. *Good*, *satisfactory* and *sufficient* are ticked once.

The target groups capacity in **Italy** of portraying themselves professionally in front of an employer, since the majority of respondents, namely three, say that this skill is demonstrated in a *satisfying* way, whereas one interviewee rates this with *good* and one with *sufficient*.

According to the answers from **Spain**, there are mixed results again. For one person this is done in a *very good* way, but in an *insufficient* one for another respondent, whereas it is *satisfactory* for a third person. Two interviewees think that it is at least *sufficient*.

A4. Do the apprentices/trainees/new workers have a clear understanding of the tasks/knowledge, skills, competences required by the occupation?

As stated by companies in **Austria**, a clear understanding of the tasks, knowledge, skills and competences required by the different occupations is rated with *good* to *satisfactory* by two companies each, but as *not sufficient* by another.

Belgium has a different picture about this question as it works *good* for two, *satisfactory* for one and *sufficient* for one person.

The representatives of companies in **Finland** have a different understanding if trainees/ new workers have a clear understanding of the tasks/knowledge, skills and competences required by the occupation. One of the respondents thinks that they have a *good* understanding about it, while one of the respondents answers that trainees have a *sufficient* understanding about those things. Most of the respondents think that trainees have a *satisfactory* understanding about the skills and knowledge required in the occupation.

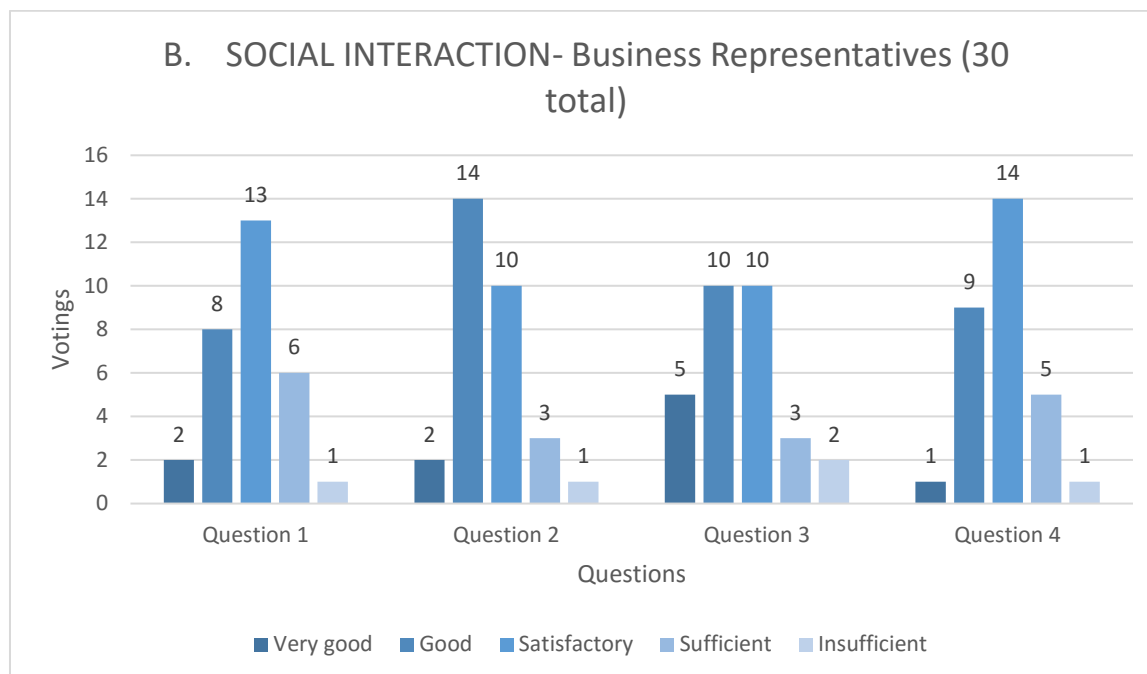
Respondents in **Ireland** are very positive about this aspect and therefore three people rate with *very good* and two others with *good*.

In **Italy** companies think that trainees /new workers have a medium understanding of their tasks, skills and knowledge required by the occupation, since in this case, most of answers are *satisfying*. A company representative states that it depends on the age of the person: in the case of high school students in internship, they have less understanding than a 25-years old person at his/her first work experience.

By contrast, three respondents in **Spain** only give a *sufficient* rating. The target groups clear understanding of required tasks and skills is still *good* for one person and even *very good* for another.

3.3.2. Social Interaction

3.3.2.1. The European Perspective



B1. Do the apprentices/trainees/new workers take initiative?

This seems to work in an average way for the target group according to companies, as 13 interviewees state that this is done in a *satisfactory* way. Two people think it is *very good*, but for one person it is *insufficient*. However, eight people value this with *good* and six other persons with *sufficient*.

'Some trainees take initiative, others do not. Some trainees are not motivated, especially those who want to continue their studies (for example in the University of Applied Sciences).' **FI**

'Unfortunately, attitudes are not developed in the formal learning curricula.' **ES**

B2. Do the apprentices/trainees/new workers seem to be openminded and willing to improve?

Fourteen people feel that this can be rated with *good* and it is still *satisfactory* for ten others. Three respondents think this is done *sufficiently*, but for one person it is *insufficient*. On the other hand, there are still two people who consider this as *very good*.

'They want to improve if they see a meaning in what they do and if the team is ok for them.' **AT**

'This depends a lot on their personalities and if they see a sense what they do.' **ES**

B3. Are the apprentices/trainees/new workers punctual and are willing to follow break times and working hours?

Two thirds of the interviewees say that this question can be either rated with *good* or *satisfactory*. Five people respond with *very good*, whereas it is either *sufficient* for another three and *insufficient* for two people.

'Following working times is sometimes a problem'. FI

'Following working times is not a big deal; they get distracted easily due to smartphones, though, even though they are told.' BE

B4. Are the apprentices/trainees/new workers able to co-operate and cope with feedback/criticism?

Copying with criticism and feedback obviously works fine when evaluating the common European answers. Nine people think that this is accomplished in a good way, whereas nearly 50 percent- namely 14 people- consider this as satisfactory. Five people respond this is done in a sufficient way. The question is valued with very good and insufficient by one person each.

'The feedback is often considered as criticism.' FI

'Usually young trainees have difficulties coping with feedback.' FI

3.3.2.2. Country-specific results

B1. Do the apprentices/trainees/new workers take initiative?

According to **Austrian** small and medium-sized companies- a total of three-, taking initiative seems to be easier, namely *good*, for the target group when there is not a high number of colleagues which apprentices/trainees/new workers must work with, whereas it seems to be more challenging for them to work with changing colleagues. Thus, there is one *sufficient* and one *not sufficient* rating.

Moreover, three persons tick *satisfactory* and two people *sufficient* in **Belgium**.

All the representatives of companies in **Finland** think that trainees/new workers take initiative in a *satisfactory* way. There are differences between trainees.

Respondents from **Ireland** follow this trend and therefore state that taking initiative is *very good* or *good* with one voting each. Three people think that this is *satisfactory*.

In general, respondents agree on the fact that new workers/ trainees/apprentices take initiative-three out of five- in **Italy** and tick *good*. For the others this is *satisfactory*.

Only two people in **Spain** say that this is *good*. *Satisfactory*, *sufficient* and *insufficient* have are answered by one interviewee each, instead.

B2. Do the apprentices/trainees/new workers seem to be openminded and willing to improve?

Concerning the second question of this category, the target group tends to be openminded and willing to improve in **Austria**. One company considers this as *very good*, two as *good* and the others as *satisfactory* or *sufficient*.

Most of the business representatives in **Belgium**- three out of five companies- answer this question with *satisfactory*. One person thinks that willingness is *good*, but for another person it is *sufficient*.

Two of the respondents in **Finland** think that trainees/new workers seem to be openminded and *willing to improve*. Otherwise three of them answer that trainees are *not very willing to improve*.

Most of the respondents in **Ireland** think that being openminded and willing to improve is *good* and for one person it is still *satisfactory*.

A very positive aspect highlighted by **Italy** is that trainees look open-minded and willing to improve. In fact, all respondents give a *positive* score to this question and all seem glad about it as it is considered one of the key factors for success.

There are similar results from **Spain**, as *very good*, *satisfactory* and *sufficient* are ticked by one person each. Two respondents say that it is *good*.

B3. Are the apprentices/trainees/new workers punctual and are willing to follow break times and working hours?

In **Austria** most of the target group receives positive feedback- three out of five companies vote with *very good*- when it comes to punctuality and willingness to follow break times and working hours. There is one *good* rating and another *satisfactory* one.

All respondents in **Belgium** have the same opinion about this question and therefore agree on *satisfactory*.

Most of the companies in **Finland**- one *very good* and three *good*- also answer that trainees/new workers are punctual and willing to follow the break times and working hours. This seems to work quite well. There was a one respondent who thinks that trainees follow these things *badly*.

Interviewees in **Ireland** tend to think positively about this question. Two of them tick *good*, whereas one person *satisfactory* and one person at least *sufficient*.

In **Italy**, ppunctuality and the respect of break times and working hours is also appreciated *positively*, therefore employers assume new workers / trainees can learn and respect *easily* these different moments foreseen for interaction with colleagues.

Being punctual also seems to work fine in **Spain**, as one respondents thinks that this is *very good*. It is *good* for two people and *satisfactory* for another two interviewees.

B4. Are the apprentices/trainees/new workers able to co-operate and cope with feedback/criticism?

Generally spoken, the **Austrian** answers concerning the ability to cope with feedback and criticism are generally positive and are split into one *very good* one, two *good* ones and a *satisfactory* one. However, according to the experiences of one business representative, this ability could be further improved and is therefore rated with *sufficient*.

Four companies in **Belgium** say that this can be rated with *satisfactory*, whereas one company says it is only *sufficient*.

The answers vary between *sufficient* and *good* (2,2,1) in **Finland**.

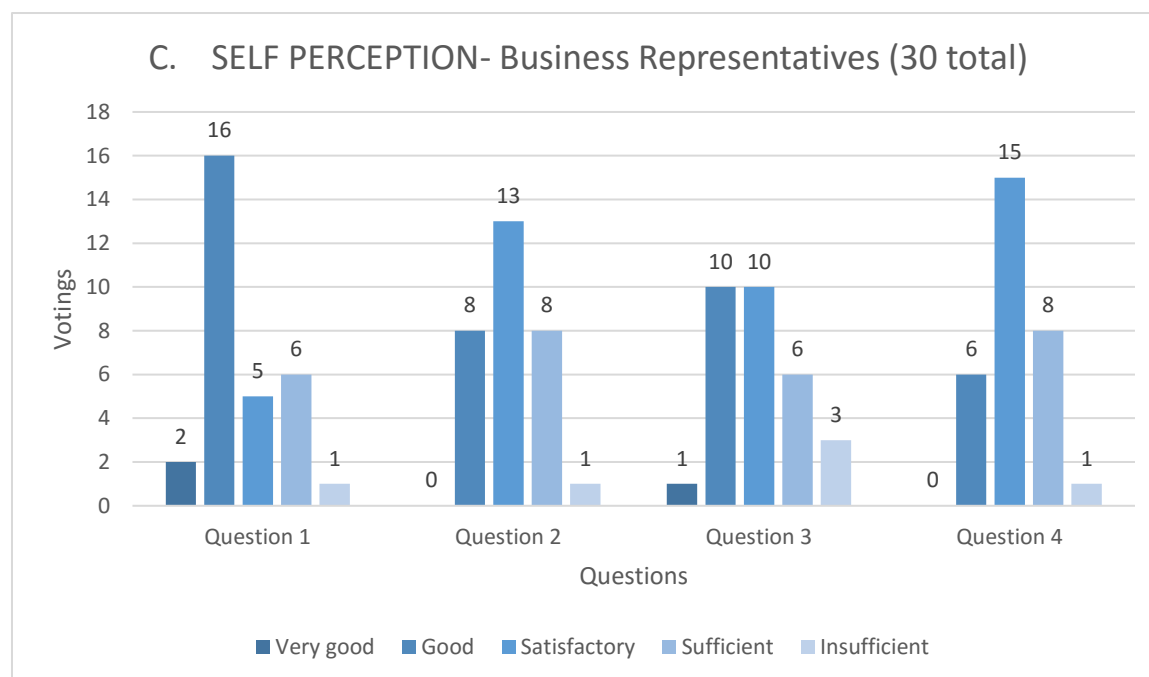
Ireland agrees that this is done in a good way as two people say it is *good* and another three say it is *satisfactory*.

In **Italy**, a quite positive score is given to trainees'/new workers' capacity of cooperation and coping with feedback/criticism, although this is a bit less appreciated. Three answers state *satisfying*. In general, it is stated that younger apprentices/trainees have more difficulties to accept criticism. Furthermore, an interviewee writes that acceptance of criticism is not always possible, and it depends on the person. They have had two totally different experiences with two trainees. To conclude, a respondent working in tourism states that trainees/new workers must participate in all activities so to get used and to learn how to manage critical situations and different problems which may arise.

For most of the **Spanish** respondents this seems to work well. For one interviewee it is *very good*, and *satisfactory* or *sufficient* for one person each. Two respondents think it is done in a *good* way.

3.3.3. Self-Perception

3.3.3.1. The European Perspective



C1. Do the apprentices/trainees/new workers ask questions when they are unsure? Are they afraid of admitting uncertainty?

16 respondents are sure that this is done in a good way, but one person thinks this is not sufficient. Still, for two people it is very good, but only satisfactory for five others. Six people think that this is at least sufficient.

'They ask questions, but they don't tell their opinions.' FI

'Asking questions generally works well; still, some are afraid to do so, because they are afraid of losing face.' **AT**

C2. Do the apprentices/trainees/new workers seem aware of their own strengths and weaknesses?

There is still a need to catch up for the target group when it comes to the evaluation of this question. 13 respondents say that this is only *satisfactory* and for one person this is even *not sufficient*. By contrast, *good* and *sufficient* are ticked by eight people each.

'Some trainees can estimate their own abilities realistically, others don't.' **FI**

'Trainees who are adults are usually aware of their strengths and weaknesses.' **FI**

C3. Can the apprentices/trainees/new workers clearly express what they like and dislike about the tasks and profession?

Most of the respondents agree that expressing likes and dislikes works either *good*- ten people- or *satisfactory*- ten people- for the target group. There are three who have made bad experiences and therefore respond with *not sufficient*. Six people have a better image and respond with *sufficient*. One person even answers *very good*.

'Every workplace is different, and trainees can only express what they like or dislike after they have started to work.' **IE**

'Expressing dislikes is not common for trainees as they are afraid of what the boss might say.' **ES**

C4. Are the apprentices/trainees/new workers able to estimate their own abilities realistically?

50 percent of the business representatives state that the target group can estimate their abilities *satisfactory*. Six people think this is done in a *good* way and for eight people this is at least *sufficient*. One person responds with *not sufficient*, on the other hand.

'They can estimate their own abilities somehow, some still cannot, whereas it's easier for the older ones to do so.' **AT**

'Improving self-perception is the key, as these lacks. Self-perception as an individual, not just for the actual job, but for their future.' **ES**

3.3.3.2. Country-specific results

C1. Do the apprentices/trainees/new workers ask questions when they are unsure? Are they afraid of admitting uncertainty?

It is obvious in **Austria** that admitting uncertainties and asking questions works *well* for four companies and *sufficient* for one.

Three respondents in **Belgium** state that the target groups performance on this topic is *satisfactory* and two say it is *sufficient*.

Most of the **Finnish** respondents answer that trainees/new workers ask questions when they are unsure and therefore four people rate with *good*. There is also one respondent who thinks that trainees hesitate to ask questions when they are unsure and rates with *satisfactory*.

Three out of five people in **Ireland** say that this is *satisfactory*, whereas it is *very good* for one and *sufficient* for another person.

Four out of five persons in **Italy** write that new workers/trainees are afraid to admit uncertainty or to ask questions when they are unsure. Four agree on *good* and one person says it is *satisfying*.

It is also *sufficient* for one person in **Spain** and *satisfactory* for another. It is *good* for two respondents and even *very good* for another one.

C2. Do the apprentices/trainees/new workers seem aware of their own strengths and weaknesses?

Three businesses in **Austria** consider the awareness of strengths and weaknesses as *good*, one as *satisfactory*. An interesting aspect here is that one international company has made bad experiences and therefore considers the target groups awareness as *not sufficient*.

Belgium has similar experiences and therefore three interviewees think that this is *satisfactory*. By contrast, it is only *sufficient* for two persons.

It seems that in the view of the respondents from **Finland** there are very different types of trainees. The ratings range from *good*-one person- to *satisfactory*, as stated by three people. One of the respondents thinks that it might be more difficult for young trainees and rates with *sufficient*.

Sufficient is also rated by three interviewees in **Ireland**, whereas two persons agree on *satisfactory*.

In **Italy** on the other hand, it is hard to assess if they are aware of their strengths and weaknesses: two participants answered *good*, two said that this skill is *satisfying*, while the last one stated that this skill is *sufficient*.

Spain follows the above trend and therefore two respondents say it is done in a *good* way. Two people say it is done in a *satisfactory* and two other people say in a *sufficient* way.

C3. Can the apprentices/trainees/new workers clearly express what they like and dislike about the tasks and profession?

When it comes to expressing likes and dislikes about the tasks and profession four out of five companies have *good* experiences with the target group in **Austria**.

The question is answered *satisfactory* by three and as *sufficient* by two persons in **Belgium**.

In **Finland** there are different views about how the trainees can express what they like and dislike about the tasks and profession. Most of the respondents, namely three *good*, think that trainees can express clearly what they like and dislike. Two of the respondents answer that trainees have difficulties to express what they like or dislike and rate with *satisfactory*.

Expressing likes and dislikes seems to be a challenge for the target group in **Ireland**, as three business representatives answer that this is *good*, but it is only *satisfactory* for one and *insufficient* for another person.

Furthermore, three respondents in **Italy** write that trainees clearly state what they like and dislike about their tasks and profession and rate with *very good*, while the remaining two write this skill is *satisfying*.

Spain has a more optimistic approach as *very good*, *good* and *sufficient* are ticked by one person each. It is still *satisfactory* for two respondents.

C4. Are the apprentices/trainees/new workers able to estimate their own abilities realistically?

Three out of five companies in **Austria** value this category as *satisfactory* which means that the target group needs more self-reflection to be able to estimate their own abilities realistically. Moreover, one company answers this question with *sufficient*. By contrast, there is at least another company rating this question with *good*.

Estimating their own abilities realistically is also *sufficient* for two respondents in **Belgium**, but for three people it is more positive and therefore valued with *satisfactory*.

In **Finland**, three representatives answer this question with *good* and two others with *satisfactory*.

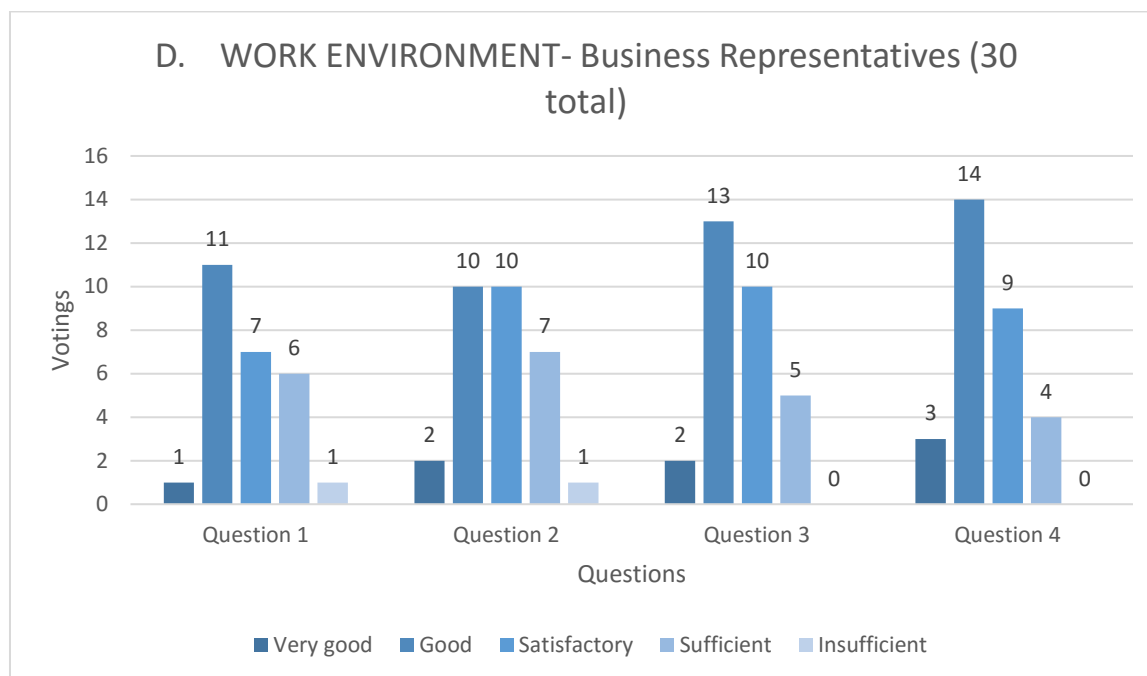
More than 50 percent- namely three people- of the respondents in **Ireland** say that estimating the own abilities works *satisfactory* for the target group. *Good* is ticked by one person as is *insufficient* by another.

On the capacity to estimate their own abilities realistically, most interviewees in **Italy** show a medium-low assessment: it depends on the person but in particular on the age of the new worker/trainee: a person states that younger trainees tend to overestimate their competences. Furthermore, it said that it depends on his/her prior knowledge about the professional role. Three persons vote for *satisfying* and two persons for *sufficient*.

Finally, the results provided by **Spain** show that this matter is also only rated as *sufficient* by one person. By contrast, two people rate with *good* and another two with *satisfactory*.

3.3.4. Work Environment

3.3.4.1. The European Perspective



D1. Are the apprentices/trainees/new workers capable of dealing with the demands of the physical environment (height, heat, cold, noise, isolation,)?

11 business representatives agree that this is dealt with in a *good* way and even agree on *very good*. It is still *satisfactory* for seven, but *sufficient* for six and even *insufficient* for one person.

'Some are, whereas some are not, it always depends on the work to be carried out.' **IT**

'Normally, this is not a big deal for the ones who work in technical fields.' **BE**

D2. Do the apprentices/trainees/new workers have a realistic understanding of the demands of the workplace?

Only two respondents respond with *very good*. On the other hand, one respondent answers with *insufficient*. Still, it is *sufficient* for seven people. Most of the people think that this can be rated with *good* or *satisfactory* and rate with ten each.

'There should be more practical training in companies to get familiar with these things.' **FI**

'Once they are into training and practical work it's easier for them to understand the demands of the workplace. Routine is very important' **AT**

D3. Do the apprentices/trainees/new workers recognise and adapt to the values of the company?

For 13 interviewees this works fine and therefore they rate with *good*. The question is still rated *satisfactory* by ten people. It is *sufficient* for five and *very good* for two persons.

'Trainees who are young might have difficulties to adapt to the values.' **FI**

'Young people can adapt to company values quite easily, although they don't really care as long as they feel good about it.' **AT**

D4. Do the apprentices/trainees/new workers interact with customers appropriately and in a good manner?

More than 50 percent give a positive feedback about this question. Thus, three people rate with *very good* and 14 with *good*. Nine people think that interacting with customers is done *satisfactory* and for four people this is still *sufficient*.

'Interacting well with customers depends on the person and also from the social background, which is hardly influenceable.' **AT**

'Interacting with customers works pretty well for the trainees.' **IE**

3.3.4.2. Country-specific results

D1. Are the apprentices/trainees/new workers capable of dealing with the demands of the physical environment (height, heat, cold, noise, isolation,)?

In **Austria**, the respondents have a rather good image of how apprentices/trainees/new workers perform in the work environment. Four out of five companies say that the target group can deal with the demands of the physical environment in a *good* way, whereas one company values this category as *sufficient*.

Dealing with the demands of the physical environment also works well in **Belgium**, as three respondents answer with *good* and two with *satisfactory*.

Four respondents from **Finland** answer that trainees can deal *well* or *very well* with the demands of the physical environment. One representative of the company thinks that trainees have *not sufficient* capability of dealing with those demands.

On the other hand, interviewees in **Ireland** rate with *good* and *satisfactory* with two people each. One person thinks that this is even *very good*.

In **Italy** it is not possible to realistically assess if in general trainees/new workers are capable to deal with the demands of the physical environment as answers are different from one to another and range from *very good* to *sufficient*.

In general, respondents in Spain have a quite good image of the target groups capability of dealing with the demands of the physical environment as this work *well* for three, and *satisfactory* for two companies.

D2. Do the apprentices/trainees/new workers have a realistic understanding of the demands of the workplace?

Three **Austrian** companies think that the recognition and adaption of company values is fulfilled *good* to *satisfactory*, one company even rates with *very good*. There is still improvement for one company as it rates with *satisfactory*.

One business representative thinks that the understanding is *sufficient* in **Belgium**, whereas *good* and *satisfactory* is ticked by two companies each.

Two of the **Finnish** companies think that trainees have a *good* or *very good* understanding of the demands. Three of them answer that those demands are *satisfactory* or not *sufficient*.

Ireland has similar outcomes as *good* and *sufficient* are ticked by one interviewee each. It is *satisfactory* for another three persons.

Trainees' realistic understanding of the demands of the work place has been a very tricky issue to assess in **Italy**: two respondents answer *good*, an interviewee states *satisfying*, and two people state *sufficient*. Italy presumes new workers/trainees have this skill, although it is believed a further investigation could be done on this topic.

Three out of five business representatives have a quite good image concerning this question and therefore also rate with *good* in **Spain**. One person thinks that it is *satisfactory*, but it is only *sufficient* for the fifth respondent.

D3. Do the apprentices/trainees/new workers recognise and adapt to the values of the company?

The **Austrian** responses are quite positive, two companies experience the target groups performance as *very good*, two others as *good* and the fifth one as *satisfactory*.

Belgium provides different data, as *good* is ticked three times and *satisfactory* twice.

Three people rate this question with *good* and two with *satisfactory* in **Finland**.

In **Ireland** adapting to the company values seems to be a bit tricky for the target group, as one respondent states this as *sufficient* and another two as *satisfactory*. However, it is still *good* for two other interviewees.

According to companies involved in the research in **Italy**, new workers and trainees are able to recognize and adapt to the values of the company although the majority of respondents stated *satisfying*.

Finally, more than 50 percent of the interviewed companies in **Spain** say that this is done in a *good* way, whereas it is *satisfactory* for one and *sufficient* for another company.

D4. Do the apprentices/trainees/new workers interact with customers appropriately and in a good manner?

In **Austria** ratings for this question range from *very good* for one company and *good* to *satisfactory* for the other four ones. This means that the demands of interacting appropriately with customers are met quite well.

In **Belgium**, the interviewees agree that this is done in a *good* way. However, for two respondents this is *satisfactory*.

Also, in **Finland** all the respondents answered that trainees/new workers interact at least well with customers-one *very good*, four *good*.

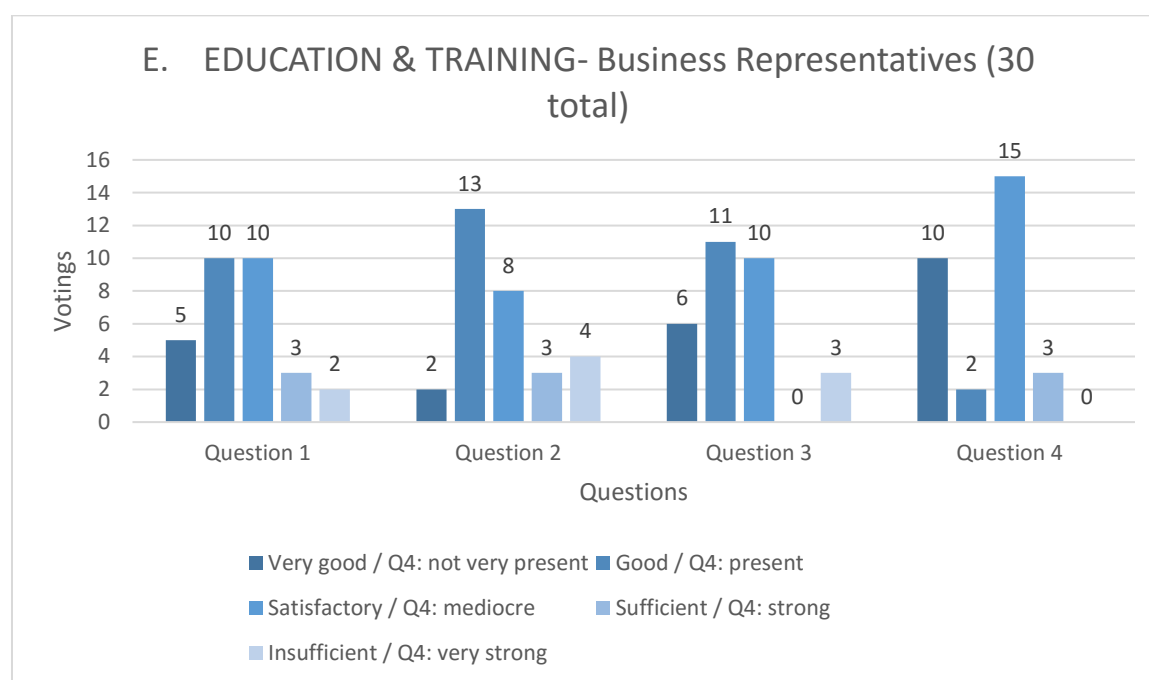
Ireland has incoherent results concerning this question as *very good* and *good* are ticked by one person each. It is *sufficient* for one, but only *satisfactory* for two interviewees.

In addition, interaction with customers appropriately and in a good manner is evaluated by most interviewees in **Italy** as *satisfying*.

By contrast, respondents in **Spain** say that this is accomplished *well*. One person thinks it is *satisfactory*, but for another person it is only *sufficient*.

3.3.5. Education and Training

3.3.5.1. The European Perspective



E1. Do the apprentices/trainees/new workers have sufficient language skills to carry out their work properly? This includes both oral and/or written skills depending on the job tasks.

In the overall evaluation it turns out that five people value the language skills with *very good*, but two with *not sufficient*. They are still *sufficient* for three others. Two thirds value the skills with *good* or *satisfactory*.

'Generally spoken, a lot of young people have grammar and spelling problems. People with migration backgrounds often have severe language problems.' **AT**

'Especially written language sometimes is challenge.' **IT**

E2. Do the apprentices/trainees/new workers possess and demonstrate sufficient digital skills?

According to the respondents these can be valued with *good* as 13 people do. For two persons these are even *very good*. However, they are *not sufficient* for four and only *sufficient* for three. Eight people think that they can be valued with *satisfactory*.

'Working with MS Office programmes like word and excel should be focused on more at schools. Some pupils did not have a single lesson in the mentioned programmes within nine years of school!' **AT**

E3. Are the apprentices/trainees/new workers willing to improve their occupational specific knowledge and skills?

The willingness to improve is rated with *good* by eleven, *very good* by six, but with *insufficient* by three interviewees. By contrast, they are *satisfactory* for one third.

'Skills are often good, but they lack courage to do and try things.' **FI**

'Trainees develop their skills further once they are into working.' **IE**

E4. Do the apprentices/trainees/new workers have any skill gaps that hinder their performances?

Half of the respondents across Europe agree that skill gaps are hindering and say that these are mediocre. For two people these are present and three persons state that there are severe skill gaps. On the other hand, one third says that there are only little skill gaps.

'They have skill gaps, and there is a need to catch up in our area in the STEM subjects.' **AT**

'A big gap is the initiative. They are used to wait for somebody who gives them instructions and what the next steps are all the time.' **ES**

3.3.5.2. Country-specific results

E1. Do the apprentices/trainees/new workers have sufficient language skills to carry out their work properly? This includes both oral and/or written skills depending on the job tasks.

To carry out their work properly the target group in **Austria** has *good* language skills for four companies in **Austria**, especially when it comes to technical jobs and/or retail. The office sector requires sophisticated language skills, both oral and written, as can be seen in one *negative* rating for this question.

In general, companies rate this question in a positive way, as language skills are *very good* for two people, *good* for another two and *sufficient* for one person in **Belgium**.

Four of the respondents in **Finland** answer that trainees/new workers have *good* or *very good* language skills, whereas one respondent rates with *satisfactory*.

Ireland has made the experience that the language skills can be rated with very good, good and satisfactory by one person each. However, these are only sufficient for two people.

New workers'/trainees' language skills to carry out their work properly is assessed as *good* by four people and two as *satisfying* in **Italy**. However, a respondent says that this skill is *not sufficient*: the company representative explains that this answer is motivated by the fact that a trainee they welcomed has foreign origins and was not able to speak Italian in a proper way.

The language skills are rated *satisfactory* by four people and *good* by one person in **Spain**.

E2. Do the apprentices/trainees/new workers possess and demonstrate sufficient digital skills?

When sufficient digital skills are demanded most of the **Austrian** businesses is quite positive about the target groups performance and three companies consider these as *good*, whereas one as *satisfactory* and the other one as *not sufficient*. Demands are not met in specific sectors where good to very good digital skills are required.

Businesses representatives in **Belgium** are also positive about the target groups digital skills. Thus, these are rated *very good* by two, *good* by another two and *sufficient* by one person.

Three **Finnish** respondents agree with *good* and two people think that digital skills are *satisfactory*.

One person in **Ireland** rates the digital skills with *insufficient*. By contrast, two people have a better experience and therefore rate with *good*, whereas they are only *satisfactory* or *sufficient* for another person each.

Despite of the different areas of activities, the acquisition and demonstration of sufficient digital skills has been assessed very positively in **Italy**: three *good* ones, one *satisfying* and one *sufficient*.

At last, **Spain** follows the above trend as digital skills are rated with *good* or *satisfactory* by two respondents each, whereas one person considers them as *very good*.

E3. Are the apprentices/trainees/new workers willing to improve their occupational specific knowledge and skills?

Commonly rated *very good* to *good*- two per two- is the target groups willingness to improve knowledge and skills required by work in **Austria**. For one company the target groups willingness is *satisfactory*.

Belgium follows this trend and has exactly the same results as Austria concerning this question: two *very good*, two *good* and one *satisfactory*.

The respondents from **Finland** answer that trainees are usually willing to improve their occupational specific knowledge and skills. Three of them rated with *good* and two with *satisfactory*.

Interviewees in **Ireland** have a quite positive attitude concerning this question as *very good* and *good* are ticked once, and *satisfactory* three times.

All **Italian** respondents agree on the fact that new workers /trainees are willing to improve their occupational specific knowledge and skills, and this is a *very positive* aspect highlighted by all companies.

The respondents in **Spain** also agree on that as three interviewees say that the willingness to improve is *very good*. On the other hand, it is *satisfactory* for one and *sufficient* for another respondent.

E4. Do the apprentices/trainees/new workers have any skill gaps that hinder their performances?

For sure skill gaps do exist in **Austria**, not only on a technical level, but also on the level of basic knowledge required during school. As for two companies each the skill gaps are *low* to *medium*, whereas for one company they are *very present*.

An average rating of skill gaps is provided by **Belgian** companies as all of them agree that these are *mediocre*.

The same can be said for **Finland** as respondents notice some skill gaps and rate from *little* to *average*.

Skill gaps of the target group are *mediocre* for four interviews in **Ireland** and *low* for the fifth respondent.

In addition, it is evident in **Italy**, too, that the most negative score is provided for the question ‘do new workers/trainees/apprentices have any skill gaps that hinder their performance’ as three people evaluate this gap as *medium*, while one interviewee states *very present* and the last one *severe*. A participant adds that skills gaps must be filled in from the first guidance interview.

Business representatives in **Spain** have noticed *severe* skill gaps, whereas there are only *some* or *no* skill gaps at all for one respondent each.

3.3.6. Conclusion

The overall results of the businesses are very similar to those of the VET staff group; there are minor differences in the country-specific results. An example of this is a more critical assessment of skill gaps, here mainly in relation to digital skills or school competencies.

To give an overview, the following points are striking:

➤ Self-perception

Here the VET graduates but also participants seem to still have some catching up to do. It is obvious, however, that here sensitisation and appropriate self-perception must take place at an early stage and that both training institutions and business enterprises can contribute relatively little to improved self-perception. Nevertheless, it is an important aspect to which importance is attached in working life in order to guarantee a good and collegial working environment as well as a good workflow.

➤ **Skill gaps**

Businesses are increasingly noticing that skill gaps are sometimes getting bigger and bigger. This does not necessarily have to go hand in hand with only a basic school education, but also affects young people with a middle school leaving certificate or a higher school education.

It is striking that, on the one hand, there are complaints about the lack of digital skills. In concrete terms, this means, for example, that dealing with MS-Office programmes is often inadequate, although this is part of the curricula at schools. Of course, this is more important in those occupations in which an experienced handling of common programs is part of everyday life than in other occupations. Someone who works in a garage will understandably have less to do with these programmes than someone who works in an office. Specialized computer programs are already part of the different vocational schools or are taught in a familiarization phase on site. The target group clearly has the least difficulties in dealing with new media, which is of course an advantage in new professions such as e-commerce management. On the other hand, the private use of smartphones during working hours is, of course, a point of criticism by business representatives.

In addition, the companies point out some serious shortcomings in grammar and spelling. However, this does not only affect people with a migration background, who have perhaps only recently arrived in their new (host) countries, but also young people without a migration background. Here, too, it can be assumed that a solution must already be found in basic school education. The same applies to scientific subjects, above all mathematics, which has also been criticised by companies.

➤ **Portraying competences**

The evaluation of the survey results and the additional comments shows that many participants of the target group - especially the younger ones - are not aware of how they can best present themselves to a company. It also seems that some VET graduates and participants are not at all aware of their competences and skills or are not able to integrate them appropriately into working life because they either do not know how or have no relation to them.

This starts with applications and continues through the entire application process up to the actual working life. It is self-explanatory that this also contributes to a higher drop-out rate. The question arises to what extent this shortcoming can be compensated by the training institutions or VET centres alone, since portraying competences and skills, sensitisation to them, as well as application management are already a fixed component of the various institutions.

➤ **Age**

On this point, there are both advantages and disadvantages in terms of age. Many companies prefer - what concerns the entry or the takeover into an apprenticeship - rather younger people, whereby it is obvious that in many cases they can be better introduced to the company values. It is also the case that these are more 'malleable' than older youths. Interestingly, however, there was also some feedback that some enterprises prefer older youths because it can be assumed that they have a certain maturity and possibly a higher ability to reflect. In general, age is an important aspect, but no clear line can be drawn to identify clear advantages and disadvantages.

➤ **North-South divide**

Interestingly, there were no significant geographical differences between the valuations of the companies and those of the VET staff.

➤ **Company size**

An interesting observation is that companies that employ a larger number of employees seem to be more critical in dealing with graduates or apprentices. The tolerance limits here are in many cases lower than in smaller companies. This could be due to the fact that smaller companies sometimes have a more family and personal environment than larger companies, and that it may be possible to talk out aspects worthy of criticism or misconduct more quickly and better. Perhaps it is also so that some young humans in SMEs feel under circumstances more comfortable, since they do not drown in the mass of the colleagues and their needs, skill gaps etc. come differently to the language.

It is pure speculation, whether this circumstance has to do also with the different characteristic of cognitive abilities and the fortune and the readiness for the self-reflection, since there are no usable studies to this topic.

In general, no valid statement can be made on this point, as there are of course enough people from the target group who are in good hands in a large and perhaps also international company context.

3.4. Recommendations

Based on the evaluation of the questionnaires, the many additional inputs and the experiences of the VET professionals and business representatives, the following recommendations for adapting the training contents to the pulse of time can be derived:

➤ **Development and further enhancement of soft skills/transversal skills**

Here it is important that training institutions pay close attention to the development of the soft- and transversal skills of their participants. The aim is to sensitise participants and to promote and challenge them in the further development of these skills. These skills are indispensable in everyday (working) life and have a lasting influence on the professional future in this context.

This was of course taken into account by the project partnership in the development of the key data fields, which are therefore of great relevance for the parts IO.2 (mobile app) and IO.3 (database) of the DITOGA project.

In the annex to this point, there are also suggestions to encourage training institutions and VET centres to develop their own training content on the subject of soft skills and transversal skills.

➤ **Enhancement and adaption of practical trainings**

In this area, it can be said that it must be the task of training institutions and VET centres to provide sufficient practical training for their participants, which must be as realistic as possible. The following quotation from Italy describes the recommendation on this point very well: *'According to my experience if the vocational course is of good level, trainees receive an adequate technical background, obviously improved with the experience in the field but good enough as a starting point. It is necessary that the course foresees many hours of technical and practical preparation through exercises, simulations, role-play, work on cases and for this you need experienced teachers working in the specific field.'*

Furthermore, it should be emphasised - and this is already happening widely and to a great extent - how important it is to gather practical experience locally in the partner companies. Only here is

practical knowledge and experience imparted if the training facilities are not conceptually designed to offer practice, as for example in the *Supra-Company-Apprenticeship Training* (UEBA2) in Austria.

It is absolutely important that - as mentioned in the quote - enough attention and time is invested to train practical knowledge, skills and competences through different methods. It is also important to regularly check the progress of the trainees in cooperation with companies. In Austria, for example, there is the so-called '*training documentation*' (Ausbildungsdokumentation) from the *Austrian Chamber of Commerce* (WKO), which can be found in the annex.

➤ **Enhancement and adaption of theoretical trainings**

The area of theoretical knowledge has also shown that there is a considerable need to catch up in some areas. In some cases, the basic knowledge of the participants, such as basic arithmetic, is already lacking. Who would build a house on a completely inclined foundation? The same applies to the expansion of theoretical knowledge if the basis is not right.

Training institutions of any kind must be aware that under certain circumstances the acquisition of theoretical knowledge at school was inadequate - for whatever reason. Generally speaking, it is a question of consolidating basic competences and only then of acquiring theoretical specialist competences. As mentioned in the practical part, it is the task of training providers to create appropriate resources to ensure this. Here, too, the focus must be on the Knowledge and Skills parts, since competences are already part of practical implementation.

➤ **Focus on case management**

Employees in training institutions must be aware that working with the target group is always an individual case management. Accordingly, a medium to long-term strategy is needed to guide the participants well through the training and thus minimise possible drop-outs during training or after starting work. It would be important here to take a holistic approach in order to be able to filter even better where there are blockades, internal drivers and triggers for frustration. In support of this, the annex contains the 'layers of diversity' and the 'Work-Life-Balance Wheel'.

➤ **Avoidance of information gaps**

It is very important that employees of training institutions and VET centres are aware of each other's most important circumstances and that there are no information gaps. This is the only way to ensure that everyone pulls in the same direction and everyone knows what the other is doing, so that optimal and individual participant work is achieved.

It goes without saying that there must also be an open exchange and communication with companies regarding individual target planning, although this does not involve the disclosure of health conditions or the social environment, as this would contradict the data protection guidelines on the one hand and be counterproductive on the other.

➤ **Close cooperation with businesses**

It has been shown that close cooperation with companies in the first labour market is essential in order to achieve a high standard of training for the target group. This also includes regular face-to-face company contacts for VET professionals. These also contribute to enabling good individual participant work and to being able to respond quickly to changes or new requirements.

➤ **Provide remedial teaching**

Since many participants in the target group have incomplete basic school knowledge, targeted remedial teaching in the various training institutions is recommended. This should also prepare the participants for vocational school and, in addition to imparting basic knowledge, should also be subject-specific if possible. This requires both internal and external resources in the form of qualified lecturers, for example. It has also been shown that the use of specific computer learning programmes also contributes significantly to this. Here, however, there is a need for control and a knowledge check of the specialist personnel in the training institutions.

➤ **Enhancement of work behaviour and motivation**

It is immensely important that there are regular workshops and activities on work behaviour and motivation. This includes telephone training, behaviour in job interviews, but also dealing with topics such as diligence, endurance, independence, motivation, reliability, creativity/flexibility and problem-solving behaviour.

➤ **Encouragement of self-perception and self-reflection**

This aspect is very complex and consists of many facets. Training institutions should be aware that a sustainable professional and private career depends strongly on the perception and self-reflection of their participants. There is no 'general recipe' here, but helpful inputs which are intended to stimulate and support training institutions.³⁸

To conclude the recommendations, the following statement from Ireland should serve as a further inspiration for VET centres and training institutions:

Aligning of VET course contents to the

•reality of the job •previous knowledge of the business world •knowledge of work security regulations •awareness of security rules •punctuality •good predisposition for work •being affable with colleagues •offering new points of view •participation •responsibility with work tools and tasks •willingness to learn and carry out new tasks •social skills and teamwork •dexterity •manual skills •speed and efficiency in their work •positive attitude •cheer and good humour •ability to work under psychological pressure •good verbal expression and communication •discretion •creativity and innovation •planning and organisational skills •IT skills and foreign language skills

³⁸ <http://www.institute4learning.com/2017/02/01/5-ways-to-promote-self-awareness-in-the-middle-and-high-school-classroom/>
<https://www.safeline.org.uk/promoting-a-positive-self-image-how-you-can-help-as-a-parent/>
<http://mtstcil.org/skills/image-3.html>
<https://whatedsaid.wordpress.com/2011/06/11/10-ways-to-encourage-student-reflection-2/>
<http://www.umsi.edu/services/ctl/faculty/instructionalsupport/reflection-strat.html>
<https://globaldigitalcitizen.org/5-best-self-assessment-practices>