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DITOGA

**Digital tracking of VT graduates via auto-analytics
to enhance the quality and sustainability
of vocational and educational training programmes**

National Report - SPAIN

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A. Questionnaires - Results

1. Companies: demands of the world of work beyond education.

A. EMPLOYMENT

According to the companies consulted, **most of the apprentices know the job requirements**, but despite this knowledge, **they usually don't understand how their role fits into the overall work processes**; they are not aware of the overall production process within their specialisations.

Nowadays, depending on their field of work, companies don't feel the need to differentiate so much between roles because of severe recruitment difficulties. However, in the fields where differentiation is required, students are not able to recognise their strengths.

Companies have a clear idea of what they want from their employees in terms of technical skills, but are unable to give a concrete definition of which soft skills they wish them to have and to what level. This problem is therefore reflected in job offers and descriptions.

B. SOCIAL INTERACTION

In general, the apprentices are **well trained in the technical field, but they lack transversal competences** due to a paternalistic education or because **soft competences** (initiative, open-mindedness...) **and attitudes are not developed in the formal learning curricula.**

Most **people want to improve** and learn from their colleagues, and are usually **highly motivated**. Likewise, **the companies give feedback** and try to explain objectives and, if necessary, in the case of any misunderstandings, ideas are reviewed and clarified. **Apprentices are generally receptive to such corrections.**

C. SELF-PERCEPTION

The trainees' self-perception is satisfactory. They may show insecurities, fear or anxiety, but **they can usually do the work by themselves**. Although they should work on their strengths and weaknesses, not just with their current posts in mind, but also their future career.

The companies indicate that most of the trainees are aware of their abilities, but that sometimes they don't express their dislikes about the profession out of fear: they identify expressing their concerns with having trouble. Apprentices don't want to make mistakes and don't ask for guidance.

The companies seek to create a climate of trust in the workplace, in which both parties can communicate effectively.

Apprentices have been held by the hand every step of the way during their previous training and are not used to being proactive and showing the initiative asked for by companies. This makes them feel insecure and afraid of making mistakes.

D. WORKING ENVIRONMENT

In general, **students adapt well to working environments**, even in the most specific or demanding areas, but **they do need a settling-in period** since they need the company to explain their values and business culture.

In some sectors trainees have to learn to **identify** who the clients are; they will never be employees of the company.

E. EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Trainees are unaware that a job requires more than just technical skills, which they have to a good level. **Most of them have sufficient language and digital skills**, but they are not capable of proposing solutions and making improvements; there is a **big gap in terms of initiative**.

Trainees want to improve their specific knowledge and skills at work, alongside their colleagues.

Reality tells us that each company has its particular needs, and what is revealed in the questionnaire is that students need time to adapt because not all soft skills are taught in class.

Our experience in training teaching staff has shown us that staff do not have good knowledge of which transversal competencies are valued by companies either. Nor are they aware of the level of these skills students will require or how best to teach them. In fact, occasionally the staff themselves are weak in many of these skills: proactivity, initiative, time management, efficient communication (e-mails, meetings...), project management, etc.

2. VET Professionals/Teachers/Trainers: perspective on the key factors and relevant requirements necessary for aligning training programmes to the current needs of the field of work.

A. EMPLOYMENT

We confirm a lot of **differences** between **intermediate, upper-level and professional** certificate students. In our system, due to the dual nature of their training, **students have total clarity on the competences of the job**. We work on all these requirements in class. And although they usually have a clear understanding of the skills and knowledge required for the work placement, they have some difficulties in showing their personal skills: **it is easier for them to portray their technical skills rather than their soft skills**.

Students are not aware of what soft skills are, or of how they increase their value as workers and their productivity in the role.

B. SOCIAL INTERACTION

Students are **co-operative** because they **learn by doing**. In the Basque Country we are developing new methodologies for our lectures –**Ethazi**–, for improving soft skills.

In general, **it's difficult to cope with feedback/criticism**, but it depends on the nature and age of the pupil. Schools **tutor students almost every month**, in order to teach them how to cope with feedback/criticism, as it is part of the process of learning. Most of them are **open** to the recommendations and **have a good predisposition**.

Sometimes **their interest depends on what** the school (in this case) **offers them** as a direct benefit or reward: learning English and taking part in an Erasmus programme.

C. SELF-PERCEPTION

In terms of the age of the students and their formal education and training, **there are many differences between them**. But as for self-perception, **pupils tend to overestimate their abilities at the outset**.

We can observe during their learning and training period that new candidates/students **have a preconceived idea of the job** that **changes during their time at school**, so in the end they have a more realistic perception/idea/understanding of the true tasks of their profession and what they can do; **they also feel unsure once they start the practical training**, and realise, through experience, the reality of their profession and tasks.

D. WORKING ENVIRONMENT

Students deal with the working environment without any problem, because **they know in advance what the occupation is like and its characteristics** (demands of the workplace) thanks to what they have learned at school.

Throughout the time they spend with a company, students **develop their ability to adapt to the values of the company, and on the job they learn how to interact** with customers, providers...

It is straightforward for students to assess their level of technical skills thanks to their school-based learning and their practical experience. On the contrary, it is difficult for them to evaluate their soft skill levels and judge whether they will be sufficient for their role. It is also a challenge for them to see how important these skills are for their professional career and how they can improve them should it prove necessary.

E. EDUCATION AND TRAINING

The **level of language, digital or technical skills** that students have to demonstrate **depends on the company's field of work**. Students in industrial sectors have a lack of people skills; service sector students have a lack of language skills, and both groups will develop these skills at work.

As government research says, **their knowledge of Spanish and Basque language is quite good**, both oral and written, and most have good digital skills. On the other hand, **they have an extremely low level of foreign language competence which hinders their opportunities**.

As for the apprentices willing to improve their occupation-specific knowledge and skills during the dual course (2nd year), **they are enjoying learning about technologies used within the company** rather than at school.

We can confirm a lot of differences between upper or intermediate level and professional certificate students. From the VET system's point of view, we're trying our best, with new methodologies, to make improvements in the soft skills field. The Basque government has also developed a plan for at least 50% of VET graduates to spend half of their degree course on placement with a company.

B. Desk-based Research

A. Describe initiatives in your country that focus on the tracking of VET graduates and their future career paths in the working world.

Since May 2017, the monitoring of university and VET graduates is an EU strategic priority in order to improve youth employability. The goal is to “understand the causes of employability problems” experienced by graduates from “particular” regions, economic sectors and disciplines, as well as to “find solutions to these problems” and also contribute to guaranteeing “an adequate provision of relevant knowledge, capacities and competencies”.

The EU 28 consider it “essential” to have quality information available about “what graduates do after obtaining their qualification or after leaving education and training” given that current data systems “are not well-developed in many areas of the Union” and comparable data is scarce.

Specifically, they are committed to **gathering socio-biographical and socioeconomic information on graduates, relating to education and training,**

complementary employment, education or training or lifelong learning and career progression. They will have to report on the progress made towards implementing the recommendation two years after its adoption.

However, **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 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.).

Statistical laws have been passed in all autonomous regions except Aragon. These laws regulate the formulation of these respective statistical plans and establish the statistical institutes as the organisms charged with statistical coordination and planning in each region. The laws also stipulate that the institutes, alongside the statistical services of government departments, contribute to the production of the aforementioned statistics, either alone or in collaboration with the State Administration.

Additionally, many autonomous regions have also formed a Regional Statistical Council as the highest consultative body for the region's statistical activity and, in some cases, a Statistical Commission has been established to facilitate statistical coordination in the region.

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

The National Statistics Institute depends on the regional institutes for data, which makes gathering the same data from all regions extremely difficult. Consequently, the sample is frequently incomplete and the system functions very slowly. Studies are often published with a **delay of 2 to 5 years**.

Very generic data such as the "Labour Force Survey" are published on a quarterly basis, but **more specific studies such as those relating to education are published much less frequently and are rather outdated**. What is more, specific studies are carried out on university graduate employability, but similar studies on VET graduates have not been done.

At the moment there is a published employability study looking at university graduates with data from 2014 that were published in 2016.

For data on VET graduates, we have to resort to the study entitled “Survey on education-training transition and employability” which uses data from 2005 that were published in 2007. This survey is based on people who finished their studies in 2001 and only looks at studies undertaken between 2001 and 2005, if the practical component was their first work experience. It also asked respondents about their current situation: if they were unemployed or had been (for how long and what they did to find work) or if they were employed or had been (type of contract, type of company, salary, whether or not they had to relocate, how they found the job and if it corresponds to their level of training, why they left their previous jobs, etc.). They also asked respondents about any occupational training they had undergone and about what they most valued in a job.

Out of almost 50 pages of questions there is not a single one 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.

An annual statistical yearbook is published which, as regards VET, only publishes data on matriculation and completion of training. This yearbook publishes labour market data but does not include data on employability based on the studies carried out.

As for the 16 statistical institutes in the autonomous regions, there is huge inconsistency in the nature of the data gathered and the frequency of collection. However, in general, employability data for VET graduates are not compiled. **We can only find data on the level of training people in work have (low, medium or high).**

Aside from state, regional and provincial statistical bodies, many Spanish municipalities also have “observatories” which gather municipal statistical data and commission their own studies, but none of them include graduate tracking, focusing exclusively on the number of people in and out of work.

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 Report”](#) in which various types of data appear: socioeconomic information, social security registration, recruitment data, demand for labour and occupations, prospects for the labour market and regions eligible for subsidies.

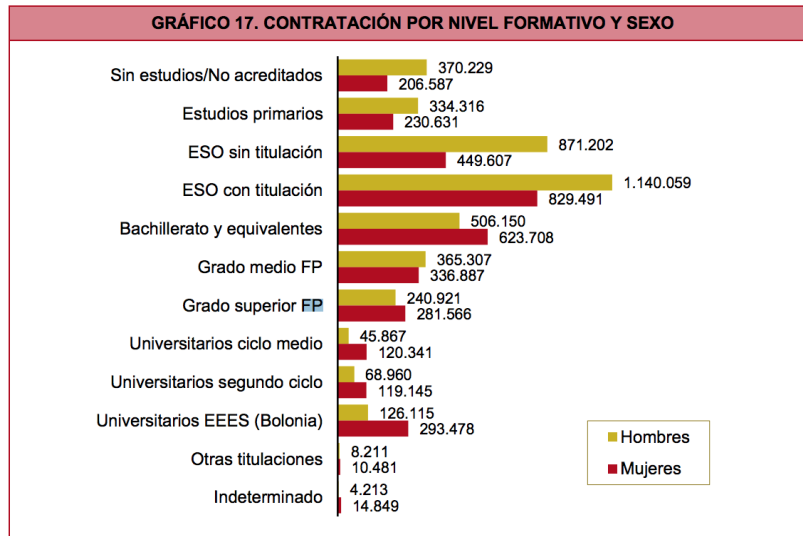
As for VET, this study only publishes data on recruitment according to training level and gender.

TABLA 23. CONTRATACIÓN SEGÚN NIVEL FORMATIVO Y SEXO

Nivel formativo	Total contratos	% total	% var. 2017/16	Sexo	
				Hombres	Mujeres
Estudios primarios / Sin acreditar	7.499.528	34,88	10,20	4.896.752	2.602.776
Educación Secundaria Obligatoria	6.191.666	28,80	5,60	3.671.394	2.520.272
Bachillerato y equivalente	2.308.305	10,74	10,12	1.114.065	1.194.240
Grado Medio FP	1.748.790	8,13	5,48	867.929	880.861
Grado Superior FP	1.540.215	7,16	5,78	729.839	810.376
Universitario	2.123.906	9,88	5,33	772.279	1.351.627
Indeterminado	88.893	0,41	6,40	15.651	73.242
Total	21.501.303	100,00	7,62	12.067.909	9.433.394

Fuente: Elaboración propia a partir de los datos del Sistema de Información de los Servicios Públicos de Empleo (SISPE). Total año 2017.

It shows the most in-demand and sought-after occupations, which allows certain forecasts to be made with regards to future needs. SEPE also publishes its annual [“State Youth Labour Market Report”](#), where the same framework as that of the previous report is applied to data for people under 30 years of age. Here we can find the same VET-related data, but for under 30s.



Fuente: Elaborado por el Observatorio del SEPE a partir de los datos del SISPE. Año 2017.

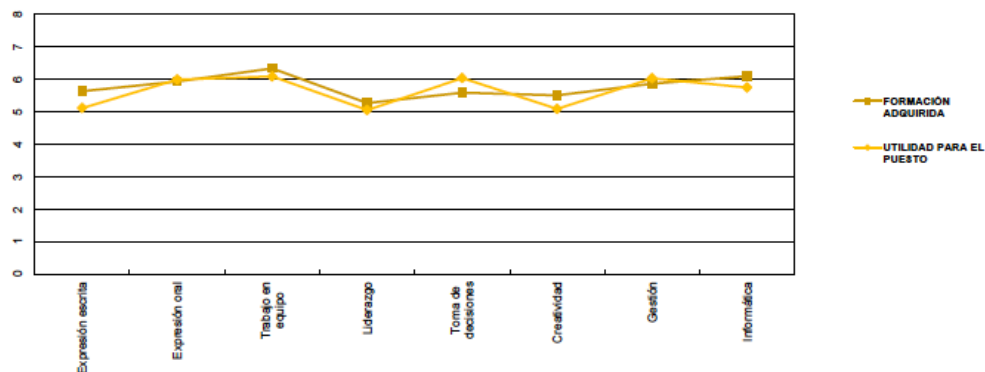
SEPE also publishes [prospective sectorial studies](#) which focus on the evolution of employment in certain valuable industries.

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.**

1. In the case of the Basque Country, the last Basque employment service (Lanbide) study is from 2016 and looks at 2015 graduates. The study is divided according to professional families and looks at data such as: employment rates; graduate employment status; time spent on job searches; the degree to which employment is related to studies; salaries; full- and part-time work; stability of employment; economic activity; occupational groups; roles performed; access routes into work; languages and competences; valuation of levels of training in acquired skills and their usefulness in the workplace.

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

14. Valoración de la FORMACIÓN adquirida y su UTILIDAD en el puesto de trabajo (puntuación media en escala 0 mín.-8 máx.)



According to this study, Basque graduates feel they are over trained in written expression, teamwork, leadership, creativity and IT skills, or do not consider these skills to be very important. Meanwhile they feel weak in oral expression, decision-making and management.

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.**

2. In the case of Catalonia, the Catalan employment system [published a study in 2017](#), but **with different data**.

In the European Commission’s report “Mapping of VET graduate tracking measures in EU Member States”, it is established that in Spain this type of tracking is only carried out, partially, in the Basque Country and Catalonia.

The results of these regional studies are usually received with a degree of confusion when they are referred to in the press as the results are highly uneven across the training categories and the different autonomous regions they are drawn from, since the labour market is very different in each case.

Thus, the highest employability rate is found in the Basque Country in the industrial training categories, reaching 100% employability. However even in the same autonomous region, there are categories with a much lower employability rate.

Some regions have much lower employability because they have a much higher unemployment rate. For example, in Catalonia the highest rate is 71%, but in Andalusia the figure is 39%.

However, everyone agrees that Vocational Education and Training (VET) is the most effective solution for optimising youth employability in Spain, as experts forecast that in 2020 half of European jobs will be filled by professionals with an intermediate-level qualification, such as those available under VET, whereas only 35% of jobs will require a university degree.

In Spain, VET data give us a glimpse of the contribution that these VET studies make to driving up youth employment: in 2014, 19% of university graduates were out of work, compared to 11% of VET graduates (an 8-point difference). Moreover, in 2015 hiring of VET senior technicians saw an increase of 19.7% and intermediate-level technicians saw an increase of 17.7% compared to the previous year.

3. There are also studies conducted by **other relevant bodies such as business associations** (regional and local), **and certain employment-based consultancies and private businesses which produce periodic employability studies.**

For example, the **Adecco** consultancy publishes studies on employment and in their [“Infoempleo de Adecco”](#) report, they publish data on VET graduate employability such as: most sought-after VET qualifications by employers (intermediate and advanced levels), sectorial distribution of job offers for VET graduates, job offers for VET graduates organised by professional category, level of training requested in job offers, distribution of job offers that request VET studies, and regional and functional distributions of job offers for VET graduates.

The Basque Confederation of Business (ConfeBask) also publishes an annual study entitled [“Employment and qualification needs of Basque businesses”](#) or the [“Study on transversal competencies in the Basque Country’s businesses”](#). For the most recent version of this study, 236 businesses were contacted and 80 participated,

which already shows an important margin of error on this subject or **how difficult it is for businesses to give answers on these types of issues.**

The study asks the businesses about 22 competencies and their respective importance: *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.*

Of these 22 competencies, businesses valued the following most highly: good predisposition for work, awareness of security rules, speed and efficiency in their work, social skills and teamwork, and discretion.

There are also specific studies such as that carried out by Fedea and J.P. Morgan with data from the Madrid region provided by the regional administration and the Social Security Treasury General on the impact of dual VET on youth employability in Spain.

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. Education is compulsory and free between the ages of 6 and 16 years. The last cycle of secondary education, from 16 to 18 years of age, is also free. Fees are charged for higher education; however the State pays a proportion of them. There are also public-private partnership and fully private schools.

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.

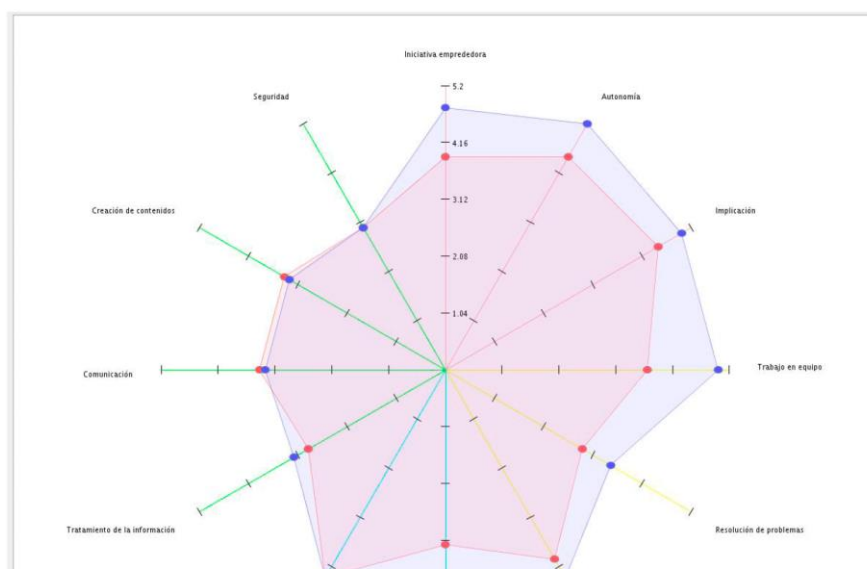
Basque VET is considered to be among the world's best and is used as a model by many countries. In 2017, the EU chose Basque VET as a benchmark for education in Europe. The Basque government realised that in order to support the acquisition of soft skills by students it had to completely transform teaching 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. This methodology is already in its deployment and implementation phase. The central element around which the whole learning model evolves is “Collaborative, goal-based learning”.

The main characteristics of the Ethazi model are:

- ‘Intermodularity’: So that the design of goals is as similar as possible to the reality of the workplace for each training cycle. This requires deep analysis of professional competences and the cycle’s learning results with a view to improving efficiency within learning periods.
- Self-managed teaching staff: Starting by fostering teamwork and responsibility within the teaching staff themselves, made up of a small group of people who take responsibility for the entire training cycle. With a high degree of self-management, they will be able to freely adjust their schedules, the use of available space, cover and substitutions etc. to the learning needs of the students at each point.
- Evaluation for the development of competences: Evaluation is integrated as a key element in the student learning process, providing regular feedback on their development and progress towards acquiring the intended professional competences.

In order to promote this evaluative approach and encourage participation in this respect by staff and students alike (personally and as integral team members) and by others who can contribute to the evaluation process, the purpose-designed SET (Skills Evaluation Tool) has been developed.



- Adaptation of learning spaces: The implementation of these new methodologies requires classrooms, facilities, fittings and custom-designed spaces that are different from those commonly found in most training centres. Their design corresponds mainly to the traits of flexible, open, interconnected spaces which promote an environment suited to active-collaborative work.



We understand that this will be the starting point for **tracking of VET** in the Basque Autonomous Region, and that it will possibly be rolled out to other autonomous regions.

The Education authorities tend to publish matriculation data by age and gender for VET, but as far as employability is concerned, they tend to echo the studies

produced by employment organisations, or even on occasion make agreements with these organisations to undertake more specific studies.

4. Besides the official education authorities, **the VET centres and Public VET centre associations have their own employment services** that monitor the employability of their students. This monitoring is very inconsistent and changeable and very rarely made public.

Studies carried out by other organisations:

This lack of data has led to a plethora of organisations, foundations and businesses collaborating and publishing their own studies.

In this group we can find studies from such disparate sources as:

- The Youth Council of Spain (which is an association of youth organisations, created by an act of parliament in 1983 and made up of the autonomous regions' youth councils and state-level youth organisations) about [the quality of youth employment](#).
- Studies by ONCE (National Organisation for the Blind) [about the employability of disabled students](#).
- The collaboration between the Mapfre Foundation (insurance company), the Atresmedia Foundation (media group) and the IESE Business School.

We 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 ours in which Spain is participating.

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

[TRACKTION](#) 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).

[VALNALON](#) from Spain is the coordinator of the Project and [Tknika](#) is also from Spain.

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. VET graduate tracking is part of a broader system that requires:

- 1) Creating and/or reinforcing VET alumni culture bearing in mind that “the ability to communicate with graduates is a precondition for tracking”
- 2) Recording information on VET graduates’ destinations. Both with regard to entry of graduates into the labour market and their progression within it, perceived relevance of acquired skills and entry and progression into other education programmes.
- 3) Using tracking for evidence-informed institutional decision-making. Tracking helps VET providers to understand the impact of study programmes, as well as their relevance for the labour market.

The general objective is to improve VET schools’ understanding of “VET-to-work transition systems” (e.g. impact of learning on VET graduates’ careers, labour market relevance). The specific goals are: to establish a more coordinated and appropriate set of VET Graduate Tracking measures at VET-provider level, to increase institutional capacity to act on and use results for a variety of purposes, such as enhancing study programmes and alumni services, and to strengthen alumni culture in VET Schools.

In exploring this interesting topic (Alumni relations + VET Graduate Tracking), the project will address a number of interconnected themes: contextual conditions (system-level requirements at regional/national/European level); conceptual dimensions (employability, school-to-work transitions, employment and entrepreneurship); operationalisation issues (methodology and instruments already in place); quality issues (optimise the ways in which graduate feedback influences VET provision/systems and is mirrored back to enhance VET learners’ learning outcomes (“closing the loop” of the VET quality cycle).

The project will result in 2 tangible outputs: a tracking protocol that simplifies data collection from Alumni (O1) and a how-to-guide entitled “Building and Sustaining Successful Alumni Relations Programmes in VET Schools” (O2)

During the first year they will be recording information on VET graduate destinations. The second year will see them create and/or reinforce VET alumni culture. In the third year they will be using tracking for evidence-based decision-making. The project is expected to bring a better and broader understanding of school-to-work transitions and hence, schools will be in a better position to match supply and demand. Quality assurance will be positively impacted as the project will support VET schools in making progress relating to 2 of the 10 European Quality Assurance in VET (EQAVET) quality indicators: indicator 5 “Placement rate in VET Programmes”, and indicator 6 “Utilisation of acquired skills in the workplace”. Learning insights will be shared with the members of the soon-to-be launched EC initiative on graduate tracking to improve information on how graduates progress.

ON TRACK “TRACKING LEARNING AND CAREER PATHS OF VET GRADUATES, TO IMPROVE QUALITY OF VET PROVISION” 2018:

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: IRCD, a research and education facility at the Technical University of Košice and the project applicant, IDEC (a training consulting company with extensive experience in European projects), IEK DELTA (Vocational Training Institute of post-secondary education), NAVET (National VET authority from Bulgaria), Eurofortis (not-for-profit organisation working in the training field, personal and professional competence development), 3s (leading educational research organisations in Austria), Intercollege (private college offering a wide range of VET study programs [Higher Education/VET] to students in Cyprus) and Q-Impulz (non-governmental, not-for-profit training and research organization).

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.

The specific objectives of the project are: to analyse, in depth, the context and need in each country; to develop a tracking system for VET graduates at institute level that will feed into the quality assurance system of the VET provider; to pilot test and implement the tracking system; to establish a tracking mechanism and integrate it in VET monitoring processes; to support VET providers to establish the tracking mechanism and integrate it into their quality assurance system.

The target groups of the project are VET schools and institutes providing secondary (EQF levels 3-4) and post-secondary (EQF level 5) initial VET programmes as well as institutes providing further VET courses.

The main outcomes of the project will be:

O1. Context study of tracking systems and measures. The study will be used as a starting point to analyse the national context, to identify indicators that have to be included in the tracking system, specific needs to be addressed and potential challenges. The context study will be performed at national level and the results will be compiled in a transnational study and will be the basis for the development of the tracking system.

O2. Tracking system for VET graduates

At the core of the tracking system is a tracking survey sent to VET graduates that will gather data related to further education, employment, career paths, skills, competences required in the labour market, and other relevant information. We will develop a model tracking survey that will be adapted to the specific needs of each VET provider and will then be implemented. The tracking survey will be developed using two different open-source survey programmes.

Mobile Applications or Apps:

Lastly, there are some small job search apps that have had little impact. If they were used a lot more and included data on soft skills, perhaps they could be used to carry out tracking. However, at the moment they are not fit for purpose.

Examples: [Feina Activa App](#) from the Catalanian Public Employment Service which allows the job search process to be managed from a mobile device.

[Mi agenda FP](#) is a management tool for VET students in Spain, focused mainly on the organisation of the FCT module (*Formación en Centros de Trabajo* or 'Workplace-based training').

Feina Activa is the Catalanian Public Employment Service's Labour Exchange Portal, which has been created so that jobseekers and businesses looking to hire staff can communicate freely with each other without any cost.

B. Do the above-mentioned initiatives also include EU initiatives and concepts?

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.

C. What initiatives are there in your country to define skills and competences?

At the moment there is no initiative that is sufficiently complete and signed up to by sufficient agents and/or entities.

There are many freestanding initiatives, but they do not go deep enough (Bertelsman Foundation, Mapfre Foundation, Atresmedia Foundation, Adecco, business associations etc.). A joint definition of competences and skills has not been reached: it seems that agents and entities are on the same page but have not agreed on a common starting point.

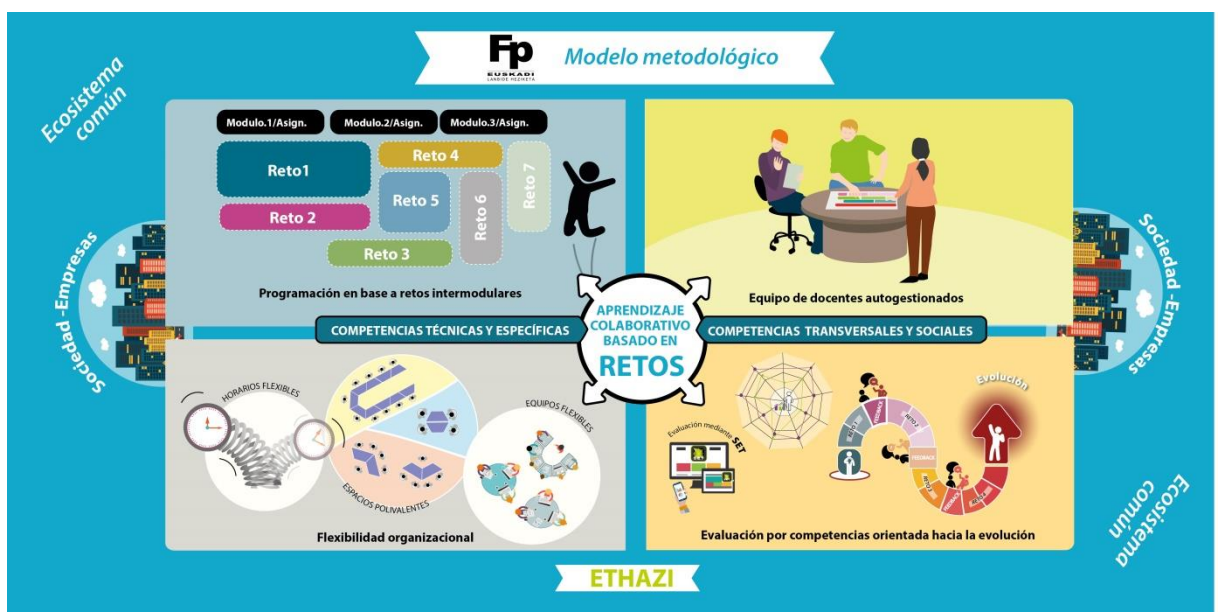
In the field of education perhaps the most complete initiative would be the work of Tknika around the [Ethazi](#) methodology in the Basque Country.

D. Do the above-mentioned initiatives also include EU initiatives and concepts?

Yes, the Ethazi methodology applied in Basque VET centres complies with European criteria.

E. Does your organization have and use standardised curricula/concepts, perhaps self-developed ones, to define skills and competences?

Our organisation follows the standardised state curriculum, but has also developed its own to improve Basque training. Our centres are applying the Ethazi methodology – COLLABORATIVE, GOAL-BASED LEARNING, which entails a fairly deep study of soft skills, the need for them in the market and how to add them to daily routines in VET and in the classroom. This project has constituted a revolution in Basque VET.



Likewise, the Basque Country’s VET has **Specialisation Programmes** promoted by the Basque Government’s Education Department, in partnership with the production industry, designed to meet the particular needs of businesses and sectors within the Basque production industry for staff with certain qualifications. These programmes, which are published in a [catalogue](#), allow students to deepen their knowledge in specific areas of expertise related to VET qualifications.

There is also a partnership in place with Confebask, the Basque Business Confederation, to attend to the needs of businesses and to act as quickly as possible to address them.

F. How do you identify skill mismatches and skill gaps in your organization?

Basque VET centres have a department for the detection of training needs (DNFs) which, combined with the close relationship centres have with businesses, allows them to identify the real needs businesses have in terms of what they look for in workers, and to see any mismatches and gaps in the skills of new workers. In this way, VET centres provide occupational and continual training in the Basque Country, with the aim of helping to meet real needs, with a three-pronged approach: training students, training workers and training the unemployed. In the development of this training, collaboration also takes place with company unions.