



Building knowledge on international cooperation in VET

Final report

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February 2015



EUROPEAN COMMISSION

Directorate-General for Directorate General for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion

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Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union, 2015

ISBN 978-92-79-48256-4

doi 10.2767/471889

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Foreword

Globalised and rapidly changing labour markets need a skilled and mobile workforce that can continuously develop their knowledge, skills and competences to thrive and prosper in this increasingly competitive landscape.

Through the Copenhagen process on enhanced European cooperation in vocational education and training (VET) that was launched in 2002, the Commission has been working together with the Member States and the social partners to improve the performance, quality and attractiveness of VET.

Although significant progress has been registered in the joint work to modernise European VET systems, both the EU and individual Member States have much to gain from opening up to the developments that are taking place in many developed and emerging economies. By exchanging experience and best practices, and cooperating on evidence-based policy making, we could altogether contribute to improving the quality and labour market relevance of the skills provided by VET systems all over the world.

At policy level there is a consensus on the fact that the global economy requires cooperation in VET policy and provision: "... As players on the global education market, national VET systems need to be connected to the wider world in order to remain up-to-date and competitive..." (Bruges communiqué 2010).

How can national VET systems best position themselves internationally, while at the same time increasing their excellence and attractiveness? How can international cooperation in VET at EU level complement national efforts? What can we learn from each other and from our partners outside the EU? How can we turn knowledge into transformative policies and practices to modernise our own VET systems? How can we shape policy dialogue, cooperation programmes and pilot projects with our partners to achieve mutual benefits? What could be the added value of an EU coordinated, strategic approach to VET internationalisation?

To help address these issues, the European Commission commissioned a study from ICF International, on Building knowledge on international cooperation in VET, in order to take a close look at VET international strategies and programmes through in-depth case studies as well as country and international organisation examples.

The study provides an overview of the state-of-play of international cooperation in VET across EU/EFTA countries, with both developed and emerging economies. It explains how international organisations focus their work on VET, and analyses the success factors and challenges when engaging in VET internationalisation. Finally the study also presents a set of recommendations for future actions at European and national levels, which provide a good basis for a broader discussion with EU VET stakeholders on how best to pursue efforts to modernise our VET systems through internationalisation strategies.

Successful international cooperation in VET requires interested partners to have a very clear and common understanding of the mutual benefits of their cooperation that must then be translated into a coherent strategy. These should address common challenges and pursue common goals. Increasing exchanges on evidence-based policy making, engaging with international organisations with the aim of modernising EU VET policies, and fostering the international mobility of learners, teachers and trainers, have all been identified in the study as priority fields that can benefit most from a strategic and coordinated VET internationalisation approach.

We hope that these findings and recommendations will contribute to strengthen VET international cooperation at all levels and provide inspiring ideas for policy makers, VET providers, companies, trainers and learners.

The study on 'Building knowledge on international cooperation in VET' was managed by ICF International. The present report was co-authored by Stephanie Oberheidt, Daniela Ulicna, Laura Eid (ICF International) jointly with Hanne Shapiro (Danish Technological Institute (DTI)) and Karin Luomi-Messerer (3s). These core team members were also supported by a team of country researchers from ICF International and its partner

companies (DTI, 3s as well as Technopolis). I would like to take this opportunity to thank the many colleagues in the European Commission, in Cedefop and the European Training Foundation that have contributed to the quality and pertinence of this study. In particular, I would like to thank my colleagues Ana-Maria Stan for having launched and steered the initial phase of the study, Maria Todorova for having steered the development and finalisation of the work, and Donatella Gobbi, Risto Raivio, and Graham Wilkie (among many others) for their insightful contributions. I also wish to acknowledge the contribution of all respondents and the participants in the validation seminar who provided useful information and advice.

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Executive summary

Why this study?

A diversity of vocational education and training (VET) models, systems and related practices has traditionally coexisted across Europe. This richness has been mapped and countries' specificities further explored by research at national level and to a significant extent at the EU level over the past decades. Next to a large set of evidence-based research available in the sector, further knowledge and experience have been gained at both individual EU/EFTA Member States and at the EU level through a wide set of intra-EU cooperation activities often developed, supported and monitored by and at the EU level.

The exchange of experience and mutual learning this has generated are now widely acknowledged (even beyond the EU, by various countries around the globe but also across various international organisations – e.g. the OECD, UNESCO, ILO, the World Bank or ASEM – with whom the EU often collaborates in the field VET for e.g. improving knowledge base in the sector). In this global setting, the idea that the VET sector may be particularly well placed (due to its particular positioning between education and the world of work and its potential capacity to better address labour markets' needs) to contribute to economic development and growth has been increasingly supported.

In the meantime, the effects of globalisation have accelerated the need to benefit from skilled and mobile labour force - and thus this of better tailoring education and training provision to local labour markets' needs. In many places of the world, an increasing number of countries (developed, emerging and even developing) have indeed recognised the value of skills/talent competitiveness, focusing on educational reform, reducing skills gaps, attracting qualified and entrepreneurial people from abroad.

The growing importance of the need to get a skilled workforce furthermore comes at a time when the global labour market is suffering from high unemployment in many, particularly European, countries. Youth unemployment, notably, stands at dramatically high levels: across Europe, almost one in four young people are out of work, education and training.

Whilst the EU has gained considerable experience and knowledge in intra-EU cooperation in VET and also actively supported wider international cooperation in higher education, its experience in the field of international cooperation in VET has been conversely much limited to date. The topic has nevertheless received increasing attention at policy level over recent years, particular through the Copenhagen or Torino Processes and also been referred to in the Lisbon Treaty (art. 166(3)). In the remit of the Copenhagen Process, the Bruges Communiqué supports more specifically the topic through its Objective 4 which sets priority objectives to foster the internationalisation of the sector.

It is, against this background, that the European Commission (under the lead of DG Education and Culture and from 1 November 2015 - DG EMPL¹) has contracted this study to get insights on the state of play at EU/EFTA Member States (plus Australia) and across five international organisations (OECD, UNESCO, ILO, World Bank and ASEM) in order to identify whether, where and how the EU could intervene in the area ultimately.

¹ Further to the designation of new Commissioners, the new Commission took office on 1 November 2014. Since, then, the responsibilities for VET (traditionally covered under DG EAC's portfolio) have moved from DG EAC to DG EMPL. All references to DGs responsible for VET should be read in this light. Though initially contracted and followed-up on a regular basis by DG EAC the preparation of this study has been supported by regular meetings between the contractor and a Steering Committee comprising representatives from DG EAC, DG EMPL as well as DG DEVCO.

Defining 'International cooperation in VET'

In addition to the above, the following considerations have been taken into account for designing the methodological approach for this study:

- **Data on the topic is scarce** overall: in particular, the topic has been far less touched upon by research in particular as opposed to international cooperation in higher education: to a certain extent this may be attributable to the fact that international cooperation in higher education has a longer tradition than that of VET. Higher education is already an international market what seems to be less the case for VET. The combination of various factors (e.g. the broad nature of VET – embedding initial VET (at school) and continuing VET (often within companies) –, its heterogeneity across EU/EFTA countries, etc.) proper to the VET sector may also make that data in the area is more difficult to capture and compare.
- **No common definition of international cooperation in VET exists:** the topic is still relatively new on national and international agendas whilst the understanding of what is behind international cooperation may also differ from one country to another². It is furthermore complex due to potential overlaps with other policy areas such as development cooperation or trade policy. The boundary with Member States' development cooperation can be for instance determined by the target country and whether it is a low, middle or high income country.

As a result of the above, international cooperation in VET has been understood as follows for the purpose of this study:

- **Bilateral cooperation** initiated by individual EU/EFTA countries (and Australia) with third countries (i.e. non-EU countries) around the globe³ in the VET sector;
- **Cooperation actions** (strategies and initiatives) led by the five international organisations listed above.

Scope

The study covers both **initial (IVET)** and **continuous (CVET)** vocational education and training. Main emphasis has been put on IVET (at upper secondary education level) though as this is where much data was found. Other types of VET at higher levels (i.e. at ISCED 5A level, as from Bachelor programmes) are excluded.

In terms of **types of cooperation**, the study has targeted all main forms of cooperation in the sector except those strictly falling under the remit of development cooperation⁴ (not covered).

For the purpose of the study, these have been clustered into three main groups:

- Cooperation at policy level
- Cooperation with and between VET organisations (education institutions and companies)
- Cooperation targeted at individuals
- Other

² With countries considering international cooperation with any countries around the world as opposed to others assimilating intra-EU cooperation as international cooperation.

³ Among which United States, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, Japan, South Korea, Russian Federation, Turkey, Brazil, Mexico, China, Hong Kong, Taiwan, India, Singapore, Thailand, Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines, South Africa (not exhaustive).

⁴ i.e. activities aimed at poverty reduction first and foremost and conducted within a clear development mandate.

The methodological approach has been designed to help gain insights on the state of play in international cooperation in VET at national and international organisations levels. Its purpose has been more specifically to shed the light on the following:

- Why international cooperation in VET?
- What (and how) is happening in the field?
- What are the barriers/obstacles and success factors?
- What can the EU do in the area?

The study has been informed by three subsequent outputs (32 country fiches, 5 international organisations fiches and 7 in-depth case studies) as well as by a validation workshop. Resulting findings have been analysed and put together in the present report.

Motivations to engage in international cooperation in VET

Although international cooperation in VET is often motivated by economic, commercial or diplomatic interests, it is also regarded as a means for exchange and mutual benefit. It provides a frame through which two or more countries share expertise with the aim of improving their VET systems and, ultimately, increasing the quality and skill-set of their labour force.

Findings reveal that globalisation and its results have been the main drivers behind international cooperation in VET. In the face of heightened competition to attract foreign investments and human capital, countries' competitiveness depends also on the quality of their labour force and of the local workers in their companies abroad.

Key findings:

Five main reasons why EU/EFTA countries decide to develop international cooperation in VET.

- To strengthen and promote, at international level, the **positioning and recognition of countries' VET systems, qualifications and certificates**. This goes in hand with the willingness to promote their country as an attractive location for education, training and business.
- To strengthen the **supply of a skilled and globally-aware labour force**. This is a two way relationship.
- **To modernise their own VET systems**: countries that engage in international cooperation in VET want to make sure that their VET system and VET schools are in line with the innovations and technological developments in a given sector worldwide.
- **To coordinate activities that mushroomed in the past** based on local and bottom-up initiatives.
- To act for not '**missing the train**'. Growing recognition of the benefits of international cooperation in VET (based on existing good practices across 'leading' countries in the area) and of the necessity to identify new sources of revenue including for their own VET system and to strategically position their country, at international level, alongside others, as a reference in VET.

But: some countries are more likely to engage in international cooperation in VET than others depending on a combination of factors.

Key drivers for third countries: demographic pressure and necessity to train and find employment for youth; necessity to address high levels of youth unemployment, a source of social instability; necessity to cater for the high demand for specialised workers.

In most cases there is a clear **link between the rationale for international cooperation in VET and countries' economic, industrial and/or diplomatic**

policies. Findings (see 4.1 for details) suggests that countries which have already strongly developed international cooperation with third countries are more likely to engage in internationalisation of VET than others. This is particularly denoted in countries where national industries operating abroad devote a substantial scope and volume of their operations in third countries (e.g. FR, UK, DE, NL, IT, NO) or in line with their diplomatic policies in regions of strategic or historical importance (e.g. France-Maghreb, UK-India, Poland-Russia, etc.).

Overall, the reasons for engaging in international cooperation in VET are twofold:

- **Outward:** the EU/EFTA country wants to ensure that the third country has a VET system and VET providers that are able to deliver the skills needed for activities of companies that originate from this country. It also wants to ensure that third countries have a positive image of its VET system as this can lead to other positive effects (perception of quality of products and services) or the demand for training as a commercial activity; and
- **Inward:** the EU/EFTA country also wants to enhance the openness of its VET system. International cooperation in VET is also a way to ensure that home VET providers are encouraged to innovate their own practices. It is also a means to strengthen young persons' international outlook (beyond the EU borders).

Looking at non-EU countries, the example of Australia shows that international cooperation in VET can be a strategic component of countries' external relations agenda but also a source of revenue for training providers who engage in training abroad.

Countries' frameworks for international cooperation in VET

Several EU/EFTA countries have engaged in activities for international cooperation in VET. Two groups have been identified:

- Some countries have developed specific strategic frameworks for international cooperation in VET (EU: Germany, Denmark and the Netherlands; non-EU: Switzerland and Australia).
- Other countries have a diversity of actions for VET internationalisation but these are either not organised in an overarching strategy, or are under a broad internationalisation strategy, going beyond VET (EU: Austria, Belgium, Finland, France, Italy, Sweden and the United Kingdom; non-EU: Norway).

In remaining EU/EFTA countries, there are some sparse initiatives concerning third countries, but most of the cooperation in VET is undertaken within the EU.

A correlation between countries with a **strategic framework** at policy level and the actual **scale of cooperation arrangements** is clearly observed. Conversely, many of the countries that have no specific framework or a marginal set of actions usually fall under the category 'not having any significant cooperation activities'.

However, if the rationale for a given action is not a strategic policy interest⁵, then there is in general a **specific demand** from a small number of **economic players** (typically companies). This observation emerged from the review of the initiatives identified in the different country fiches produced for the purpose of the study). Meanwhile, it is important to note that the absence of priority given to the topic at policy level does not mean that VET-related cooperation activities are not strategic.

When it comes to the key stakeholders/bodies involved in international cooperation in VET, the following were identified:

- Strategy-level bodies which set the agenda of international cooperation in VET at national level
- Bodies which provide technical assistance and capacity-building support to third countries
- VET providers
- Companies involved in VET provision
- Facilitators of international cooperation in VET.

A lack of coordination/information between public and private agencies and other key actors is commonly reported, including in more active countries. Potentially inspiring practice examples exist in this area though.

Countries' initiatives in international cooperation in VET

At practice level, findings reveal that international cooperation activities can (unsurprisingly) take place at various levels, have different purpose and involve different means and actors depending on the objectives pursued and leading and beneficiary countries' needs. For the purpose of the study, the initiatives collated in individual country fiches have been clustered into four main categories:

- **Cooperation at policy level:** this includes technical assistance and capacity-building to competent public bodies in third countries, along the lines of a particular EU/EFTA VET model. Such activities lead to structural or systemic changes in their VET systems.
- **Cooperation with and between VET organisations** (education institutions and companies): this category groups initiatives at operational level between and with VET organisations (education institutions and companies), at home and abroad. These may lead to: delivery of training abroad, creation of VET training centres abroad, capacity-building, etc.
- **Cooperation targeted at individuals:** this category groups all initiatives which integrate international elements in VET at home, and which can benefit home - as well as - international students, e.g.: outbound and inbound student mobility programmes, financial schemes to support student mobility, outbound and inbound VET teacher/trainer mobility, etc.
- **Other:** this category groups cooperation activities which can be considered as 'soft' – they do not involve high-level decision-makers. Such activities include: information exchanges, market research, marketing activities, etc.

Prevalent types of cooperation activities

A conceptual framework supported the framing of what 'cooperation in VET' covers. Categories of cooperation activities have thus been distinguished by level which they address (policy or system-level, VET provider level and individual level and a transversal category which covers information exchange and awareness raising). Box 6 presents those in detail.

Cooperation activities identified as having been most commonly-pursued are:

- Outbound and inbound student mobility programmes, including financial schemes to support student mobility programme,
- Policy dialogue at strategic level,
- Creation of VET institutions abroad,
- Bilateral cooperation between VET institutions leading to VET delivery and capacity-building.

Cooperation with industrialised countries has focused on the recognition of professional qualifications and on mobility programmes (mainly at higher level VET however). It has focused less on systemic-level activities such as those which lead to the transfer of VET standards or processes, as those are generally established and effective in industrialised countries.

Findings suggest that cooperation activities cannot be clearly distinguished between those conducted with industrialised and those with emerging countries. Most activities are conducted to some extent with both industrialised and emerging countries. On the other hand, cooperation with OECD countries is either focused on higher-level VET or on the recognition of professional qualifications and skills, and on mobility promotion (mainly higher VET). They focus less on systemic-level activities such as those which lead to the transfer of VET standards or processes, as those are generally already established in those countries.

Limiting and success factors to international cooperation in VET

The landscape for international cooperation in VET remains fragmented overall (i.e. with a diversity of VET systems/models within EU/EFTA countries as well as across third countries; a varying level of interest given to the VET sector, etc.). Next to a few large scale actions, there is a large number of small and medium scale initiatives of different nature. Meanwhile, there is already competition for providing training worldwide.

A key lesson learnt from the analysis is that this fragmentation can be an important constraint. This often leads to duplication of efforts on the ground, lack of visibility of who is doing what in the sector and the difficulty for grassroots organisations (VET providers) or for companies to understand existing activities.

Other commonly encountered **limiting factors** include:

- The lack of a common definition/understanding of international cooperation in VET;
- The lack clear support at policy level and lack of coordinated actions on the ground;
- Legal/visa barriers;
- Financial constraints, etc.

Several interviewed practitioners also referred to the underestimated time needed for establishing cooperation, building common interests, commitment and understanding on all partnership sides as well as the fact that companies must be convinced of the added value of the programmes they support, etc.

With regard to success factors, the following (not exhaustive) was identified:

- Initiatives **embedded in a wider outreach strategy** (sectoral or geographical) or a coherent set of actions have been more successful than haphazard and stand-alone initiatives.
- **An equal level of commitment on both sides of the partnerships** has been highlighted as a pre-condition to successful cooperation. Commitment at strategic level is more so important to secure sustained commitment at all levels of the cooperation.
- **Pouring the necessary resources to adapt a model or VET offer to specific needs and contexts** has been highlighted as a success factor.
- A **teacher of trainer's capacity to work across distinct organisational and geographical 'cultures'** is also a key success factor.

Outreach activities (networking or visibility actions) conducted by local representations to coordinate and promote cooperation have also been key success factors. Embassies have been mentioned in several initiatives as contact points and

facilitators between different parties. Their support reportedly varied according to the importance assigned to VET in the country of origin.

International organisations' strategies and initiatives

VET has not always received the highest priority from the international organisations. In the context of the growing importance accorded to lifelong learning and the current global financial and economic crisis, policy-makers and international organisations have gradually increased their focus on VET.

Findings reveal that the growing importance paid to VET (or TVET as the terminology used by each them may differ) is mirrored in their respective strategies and initiatives. Despite different origins, governance structures and missions, the attention they pay to the topic has some common elements which are outlined below.

Key messages

- There are **benefits of bilateral and multilateral cooperation to improve the evidence base** about what works in VET, taking into account that the comparable international knowledge base about VET is moderate compared to both higher education and basic education, and in particular when it comes to comparable statistics.
- **Quality VET** improves labour market outcomes and prepares individuals for a changing labour market as employed or self-employed, including employment and self-employment in the informal sector.
- **Global economic integration**, the rate of diffusion of technologies, and new work organisation practices enabled by Information Communication Technologies (ICTs) have **increased the demands for skilled workers** across developed, emerging and developing economies, and at the same time has also led to unemployment in poorly paid service jobs and in precarious jobs in the informal economy. To improve employability over time, skilled workers need a broader skills base including solid foundation skills, entrepreneurship, ICT and green skills, and VET pathways cannot be dead-ends.
- **Growing policy focus on VET** and in particular **work-based learning** and **apprenticeship** as a means to combat youth unemployment, apprenticeship is increasingly seen to be relevant not only to youth. Policy coordination in particular between labour market policies, economic policies and education policies are advocated if VET effectively is to function as a policy lever in tackling unemployment.
- The **image of VET has to be improved**. Means to do so are horizontal and vertical permeability; engaging employers (social partners) in governance, co-funding, in defining standards, and in the development of curriculum.

The most commonly reported means to address their strategic goals in the area are furthermore outlined in the box below.

Means to address strategic goals in the 5 international organisations

- **Quantitative data collection:** ILO, UNESCO, OECD, World Bank
- **Qualitative research to stimulate outcome driven and evidence-based activities:** ILO, OECD, ASEM, World Bank, UNESCO
- **Cooperation on tools to improve quality:** ILO, UNESCO, ASEM, World Bank:
- **Policy reviews:** ILO, UNESCO, OECD
- **Technical assistance/network facilitation:** ILO, World Bank, UNESCO

- **Seminars, publications, conferences, on-line dissemination:** ILO, UNESCO, OECD, World Bank, ASEM

Recommendations for future developments at EU and national level

The following recommendations derive from the above and from exchanges with key stakeholders during the workshop organised in the framework of this study. These have been clustered into the following categories:

What the EU should do:

- To actively contribute to and support data collection, evidence-based research in the area
- To foster synergies (on the topic) between VET and higher education at DG EAC/EMPL level as well as wider dialogue with other DGs (e.g. DG ENTR, DG DEVCO, etc.)
- To foster its collaboration with international organisations notably in the remit of the Inter-Agency working group on TVET.
- To raise EU/EFTA Member States' awareness on the topic through the OMC (e.g. adding the theme in events supported by the WG on VET and/or the VET-Business Forum)

What the EU could do:

- To create a platform for EU/EFTA VET policy makers and VET providers (VET institutions and companies) to showcase their international activities for third country interested parties to consult
- To conduct a promotional campaign that would target third countries.
- To open up certain existing OMC initiatives to third countries, e.g. the Alliance for apprenticeships, tools on skills and qualifications, etc.
- To add new priorities linked to international cooperation in existing EU funding (rather than increasing the funding envelop), e.g. by opening Erasmus+⁶ to VET pupils and trainers/trainers.

Sectoral approaches:

Another area where the EU could intervene regards sectoral approaches. Focusing VET cooperation within sectors that function as sub-suppliers to core industries in a particular country can strengthen economic integration and can furthermore function as a lever of European firm specialisation and competitiveness.

An EU intervention in the area would be relevant too. This could for instance take the form supporting the development of trans-national sectoral partnerships ultimately. Some sector skills-related initiatives (e.g. the Sector Skills Alliances, the EU Skills Panorama) exist at the European level but a deeper reflection on the topic in an international perspective would merit to take among different European Commission's Directorate General (DGs) interested first. Gaining more knowledge and evidence from ongoing and potentially promising measures at Member States could be recommended too.

⁶ Such an action would imply revising Erasmus+ legal basis.

Country codes

EU/EU-28	European Union
AT	Austria
BE	Belgium
BE fr	Belgium – French Community
BE nl	Belgium – Flemish Community
BG	Bulgaria
CY	Cyprus
CZ	Czech Republic
DE	Germany
DK	Denmark
EE	Estonia
EL	Greece
ES	Spain
FI	Finland
FR	France
IE	Ireland
IT	Italy
LV	Latvia
LT	Lithuania
LU	Luxembourg
HR	Croatia
HU	Hungary
MT	Malta
NL	The Netherlands
PL	Poland
PT	Portugal
RO	Romania
SE	Sweden
SI	Slovenia
SK	Slovakia
UK	United Kingdom
EFTA	European Free Trade Association
CH	Switzerland
IS	Iceland
NO	Norway
Other	
AU	Australia

1 Introduction

'Globalisation has engendered a rethinking of the nature of both knowledge and skills (...). Technological change and post-industrial emphasis on services over production have reduced the divide between education and training'. VET is 'consequently back on the international agenda'⁷.

1.1 Why 'internationalising' VET?

Today's economy indisputably benefits from being global and mobile. The clothes that we wear, the cars that we drive, the new technological devices that we use, the deployment of information networks around the planet etc. all result from converging drivers and factors of production that come from several countries around the world.

One of the key engines of this global and mobile world is skilled workforce. In many places of the world, an increasing number of countries (developed, emerging and even developing) have recognised the value of skills/talent competitiveness, focusing on educational reform, reducing skills gaps, attracting qualified and entrepreneurial people from abroad.

The growing importance of the need to get a skilled workforce, for those countries, comes at a time when the global labour market is suffering from high unemployment in many, particularly European, countries. Youth unemployment, notably, stands at dramatically high levels: across Europe, almost one in four young people are out of work, education and training.

Meanwhile skills mismatch keep growing around the globe. According to a recent study⁸, up to eight million jobs are left vacant each year in the US and Europe (with different countries requiring different skills). On the other side of the coin, the demand for highly-skilled workers now far exceeds the talent pool in Asia. China, for example, 'may face a skills gap of more than 20 million college-educated workers by 2020; Indonesia's need for skilled workers could rise from 55 million to 113 million by 2030'.

In addition to (and often preceding) policy makers' recognition that actions must be taken in this area, companies increasingly attempt to contribute to the above through various education and training-related measures designed to address their strategic needs as well as the local needs of their partner countries.

All this emphasises that education policies cannot be seen in isolation, but need to be thought more in synergy with economic and labour market policies. In short, it is more crucial than ever that governments, education providers and companies work together to create labour markets that are based on an understanding of what employers need and the skills required to meet those needs in an efficient labour market, now and in the future, taking into account labour mobility and education systems.

Among the latter, the idea that vocational education and training (VET) systems may have (due to their particular positioning between education and the world of work) an important role to play in this area is increasingly supported. Besides individual countries, such a growing support has been paid for instance by several international organisations over recent years. Since the emergence of the financial crisis, this trend has been reinforced and international organisations such as the ILO, the World Bank, and the OECD have further explored the question whilst cooperating with the G20 linking employment policies to VET.

⁷ European Commission, 'TVET and skills development in EU development cooperation', Final report, 2012.

⁸ INSEAD, The global talent competitiveness index 2013, <http://global-indices.insead.edu/gtci/documents/gcti-report.pdf>

At EU level, the significance of international cooperation in VET has been underlined over past years through policy documents and recommendations⁹. The Bruges Communiqué supports that European VET systems need to consider the strong international and global dimension of the European economy (i.e. so as to contribute to growth and employability in a globalised economy). Through its Objective 4 the Communiqué sets priority objectives to foster the internationalisation of the sector. In line with this, the European Commission and several of its Directorates General (including DG Education and Culture (DG EAC) and DG Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion (DG EMPL), etc.) have started paying growing attention to the topic.

1.2 Why this study?

Limited knowledge-base as opposed to international cooperation in higher education

When dealing with international cooperation in education, the 'internationalisation' of the higher education sector comes as an immediate reference in light of the amount of research contributing to evidence-based policies and running initiatives across the EU and beyond that address the topic.

As opposed to international cooperation in VET, a first obvious difference between developments in both sectors is the fact that international cooperation in higher education has a longer tradition than that of VET.

A main feature of international cooperation in higher education is also that the concept has, since the 1980's, moved *'from being about the simple exchange of students to the big business of recruitment, and from activities impacting on an incredibly small elite group to a mass phenomenon'*¹⁰.

In short, whilst higher education is already an international market this seems to be less the case for VET (e.g. VET students generally find jobs in the local employment area, VET mobility concerns a marginal share of students, etc.).

The heterogeneity of the VET systems/models within EU/EFTA countries (or third countries); the specificities¹¹ of the sector ; the varying level of value given to VET (by policy makers and the civil society) from one country to another; the fact that international cooperation in VET may much depend on individual countries' commercial and diplomatic strategies (e.g. focusing on sectors where individual countries have an industrial added value), etc. may lead to different focus of interest, intention and strategies from one country to another.

Another key difference, mostly deriving from the above, is that international cooperation in higher education has progressively emerged as a hot topic on EU policy agenda¹². The recently adopted Commission Communication on higher education in the world¹³ gives a strong signal in this sense.

The latter places specific emphasis on how Member States and higher education institutions can develop strategic international partnerships to tackle global challenges

⁹ E.g. Bruges Communiqué, Commission Communication on 'Rethinking education', etc. The Lisbon Treaty also includes a reference to this issue.

¹⁰ De Wit, H. (20 March 2011). Global: trends and drivers in internationalisation. University World News, <http://www.universityworldnews.com/article.php?story=20110318125131371>

¹¹ E.g. embedding both school-based initial VET and company-based parts of continuing VET often seen as an "internal company's business.

¹² i.e. mainly as a result of policy making and actions supported in the framework of the Bologna process and at EU level (through the Lisbon strategy and the Europe 2020 strategy and their operational programmes, the LLP and its successor Erasmus+).

¹³ <http://cor.europa.eu/en/activities/stakeholders/Documents/comm499-2013.pdf>

more effectively, setting three key areas for a comprehensive internationalisation strategy:

- Promoting the international mobility of students and staff;
- Promoting internationalisation at home and digital learning; and,
- Strengthening strategic cooperation, partnerships and capacity building (e.g. joint and double degrees, partnerships with business and also international development cooperation partnerships)

The above is complemented with two policy objectives for EU's contribution:

- Increasing the attractiveness of European HE by improving quality and transparency.
- Increasing worldwide cooperation for innovation and development.

In addition to stronger policy support, EU member States will have the possibility to benefit from EU funding to foster their internationalisation strategies, in particular through the Erasmus+ programme.¹⁴ This is not foreseen in the case of VET¹⁵.

Against this background, the internationalisation of higher education can also be described as a **political aim** driven by structured activities and related targets (such as the Bologna target of having 20% of students being internationally mobile, trends towards larger numbers of international students and more teaching in English, etc.). This is not the case for the VET sector yet.

On the other side of the coin, a commonality between VET and higher education internationalisation is that they are both driven by **globalisation** and related factors, including financial challenges in universities/VET institutions due to their respective domestic economic situations and demographic drives for increased immigration.

For these reasons and as policy makers are paying growing attention to the topic in various settings, getting a better understanding of the rationale for investing or not in international cooperation in VET and related drivers; main obstacles encountered; what 'works well' and how this could inform policy development at EU and national level, is a central objective of this assignment.

To know better what falls under international cooperation in VET

A common definition of international cooperation in VET currently does not exist. The subject is still relatively new on national and international agendas.

The subject is furthermore complex due to potential overlaps with other policy areas such as development cooperation or trade policy. The boundary with Member States' development cooperation can be for instance determined by the target country and whether it is a low, middle or high income country.

¹⁴ In the remit of the new programme, approximately €400 million a year, from 2014 to 2020, will be earmarked for European universities to fund cooperation and mobility with non-European partners. A pan-European campaign to promote Europe as a study and research destination is also foreseen. Actions in this area will be also channelled through new research actions under the Horizon 2020 programme.

¹⁵ Such an action would thus imply revising Erasmus+ legal basis.

Scope

For the purpose of this study, international cooperation in VET has been understood as:

- bilateral cooperation initiated by individual EU/EFTA countries (and Australia) with third countries (i.e. non-EU countries) around the globe¹⁶, and;
- multilateral cooperation initiatives put forward by international organisations and involving those countries, in the VET sector.

The study covers both **initial (IVET)** and **continuous (CVET)** vocational education and training. Main emphasis has been put on IVET though as this is where much data was found. The concept of the '**internationalisation of VET at home**¹⁷' has not been explored in the study.

Our assumption has been that types of cooperation activities to cover may embrace activities in the field of:

- Development, coordination and/or implementation of international VET policy
- Institutional capacity building to public authorities/ Technical Assistance, including on VET standards and qualification systems
- Development and management of international networks of VET institutes (exchange of information and joint projects)
- Certification and quality assurance of VET provision abroad
- Marketing of VET providers and business development
- Mobility programmes
- Research, information sharing and networking
- Development of training systems, curricula, and education equipment.

Due to the lack of data in the area, a primary objective of the study has been to gain knowledge on the extent to which actual policies/strategies exist across the EU/EFTA Member States to support international cooperation in VET, what their main features and priority objectives are, to what extent they support or promote given types of cooperation and how, etc.

To build upon existing EU expertise in the field of VET

Over past years, the European Commission (DG EAC, DG EMPL but also other DGs) has gained solid experience and knowledge in the field of VET (at both policy and programme levels) and cooperation across Europe. Its actions have been complemented by the solid expertise of the European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training (Cedefop)¹⁸.

Its core mission is to support the development and implementation of national VET policies. Cedefop's activities mainly build on data collection, production of thematic studies, policy reviews, organisation of thematic events at the European level, development of knowledge sharing online tools (e.g. the EU Skills Panorama), etc.

¹⁶ Including United States, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, Japan, South Korea, Russian Federation, Turkey, Brazil, Mexico, China, Hong Kong, Taiwan, India, Singapore, Thailand, Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines, South Africa (not exhaustive).

¹⁷ As a result of the internationalisation of the world of work, training courses can be more internationally-oriented (e.g. integration of foreign languages and e-learning courses). Foreign students or apprentices can be integrated in VET courses or placements at home. This is what is covered by the concept of the '**internationalisation of VET at home**'.

¹⁸ Its core mission consists of supporting the development and implementation of national VET policies the European Commission, Member States and social partners in designing and implementing policies for an attractive VET that promotes excellence and social inclusion'.

However, their respective scope of action has been limited to the EU to a large extent. On a wider scale, the European Training Foundation (ETF) has also largely contributed to the EU knowledge and expertise in the field of VET.

The European Training Foundation (ETF) – a decentralised agency of the European Union – has around 20 years of experience in developing VET systems and policy dialogue in 30 countries. Its geographical remit is transition or developing countries in the EU's immediate vicinity, i.e. in the enlargement and neighbourhood regions and Central Asia. The objective of the ETF's work has been to develop the local labour force to work towards sustainable development, competitiveness and social cohesion in-country. It has experience in technical assistance, data collection and policy analysis.

Besides their respective areas of expertise, both agencies as well as DG EAC have also taken part in working groups and other fora focusing on VET at the international level. This is among other things the case of the Inter-Agency Working Group on TVET Indicators and this on Greening TVET and Skills Development which bring together several international organisations such as OECD, UNESCO, ILO, the World Bank and ASEM, etc.

With regard to initiatives supported by the European Commission, several are aimed to promote cooperation in VET. This is for instance the case of the European Alliance for Apprenticeships (EaFA) which is aimed to promote apprenticeship schemes and initiatives across Europe; the Sector Skills Alliances to promote European cooperation within a specific sector of the economy, the EU Skills Panorama, an online platform presenting quantitative and qualitative information on short- and medium-term skills needs, skills supply and skills mismatches. These however do not include third countries.

The European Commission has also supported international cooperation initiatives (beyond EU borders) at higher education level, through the programmes Erasmus Mundus, Tempus and Edulink for instance. The new Erasmus+ programme, though putting greater emphasis on cooperation with third countries than its predecessor, will nevertheless continue supporting international cooperation in the higher education sector. In parallel, in the last five years DG EAC has strengthened its policy dialogue with key partners as China, India, Australia, Canada or the U.S. In some cases, this dialogue has also concerned elements related to VET. This was for instance the case in the 2006-2013 EU-US and EU-Canada cooperation agreements which had among their priority objectives this of making VET institutions in Europe and in the US/Canada more attractive and competitive¹⁹.

Besides DG EAC and the 'VET-specialised' agencies, cooperation in VET has been a strong area of the Commission's development cooperation (i.e. cooperation with low income countries), which is under the remit of EuropeAid. According to a 2012 report on TVET and Skills Development²⁰ in EU Development Cooperation produced for DG DEVCO, the Commission's development interventions have targeted:

- policy and governance,
- legal frameworks,
- management mechanisms and tools,
- TVET financing,
- relevance to the needs of the labour markets,
- platforms of dialogue and interaction between governments, employers, workers' organisations, civil society and communities.

¹⁹ Both agreements foresaw cooperation in several areas such as development of curricula, international internships, etc.).

²⁰ <http://capacity4dev.ec.europa.eu/public-employment-social-protection/document/tvet-and-skills-development-eu-development-cooperation-en>

These interventions also covered active labour market policies and measures such as 'intermediation on labour markets by public and private labour exchanges, the establishment of employment and training funds, job insertion schemes, career guidance (at several levels) and incentive schemes for enhancing the effectiveness and attractiveness of TVET and Skills Development'²¹

Overall, approaches in this area 'range from technical assistance, policy advice, capacity building to the direct implementation of pilot components, knowledge exchanges and best practices.'²²

Gaining a better knowledge on who does what, in particular among those international organisations that have carried out actions in the field of international cooperation in VET, but also at European Commission level (other DGs responsible for cross-cutting policy areas) is a crucial element for avoiding duplication of efforts and anticipating areas where joint actions or complementarities could be envisaged in the future.

The Bruges Communiqué's strategic vision

Despite the limitations outlined above, the significance of international cooperation in VET has been repeatedly underlined over past years through EU policy documents and recommendations²³. Amongst them, the Bruges Communiqué supports that European VET systems need to consider the strong international and global dimension of the European economy (i.e. so as to contribute to growth and employability in a globalised economy).

Through its Objective 4 the Communiqué sets priority objectives to foster the internationalisation of the sector as the box below outlines.

Objective 4 of the Bruges Communiqué:

Developing a strategic approach to the internationalisation of I-VET and C-VET and promoting international mobility²⁴:

- Economic globalisation encourages **employers, employees and independent entrepreneurs** to extend their scope beyond the borders of their own countries. **VET providers** should support them in this process by giving an **international dimension** to the **learning content** and establishing **international networks** with partner institutions;
- **Participating countries** should encourage local and regional authorities and VET providers – through incentives, **funding schemes** (including use of the European Structural Funds) and the **dissemination of best practices** – to develop strategies for cross border cooperation in VET, with the aim of fostering greater mobility of learners, teachers and trainers and other VET professionals. Participating countries should promote VET that allows, encourages and - preferably - integrates **mobility periods**, including work placements, abroad;
- **Participating countries** should systematically use and promote **European transparency tools** such as EQF, ECVET and Europass to promote transnational mobility;
- Participating countries should promote opportunities for language learning for both learners and teachers in VET, and the provision of **language training**

²¹ Ibid.

²² Ibid.

²³ Bruges Communiqué, Commission Communication on 'Rethinking education', etc.

²⁴ The Bruges Communiqué on enhanced European Cooperation in Vocational Education and Training for the period 2011-2020. http://ec.europa.eu/education/lifelong-learning-policy/doc/vocational/bruges_en.pdf

adapted to the **specific needs of VET**, with a special emphasis on the importance of foreign languages for cross-border cooperation in VET and international mobility.

At a wider level, the Lisbon Treaty (art. 166 (3)) also stipulates that: 'The Union and the Member States shall foster cooperation with Third countries and the competent international organisations in the sphere of vocational training',²⁵

However, as reflected above, very little has been done in the area and, more specifically, nothing concrete yet for addressing the above-mentioned strategic objective.

The European Commission has, against this background, contracted this study to get a better understanding of the state of play in the field at EU/EFTA Member States and across five international organisations (OECD, UNESCO, ILO, World Bank and ASEM): what countries and international organisations are doing; what strategies and policies exist, what are the key drivers, obstacles, success factors, etc. so as to identify if there are opportunities for EU strategic considerations and action²⁶.

²⁵ www.lisbon-treaty.org/wcm/the-lisbon-treaty/treaty-on-the-functioning-of-the-european-union-and-comments/part-3-union-policies-and-internal-actions/title-xii-education-vocational-training-youth-and-sport/454-article-166.html

²⁶ One of the initial requirements for the study was to provide the basis for developing a European strategy in the field of international cooperation in VET. Though this ultimate focus may remain of potential relevance for the future, it has been voluntarily kept out of this study. As noted earlier, the latter has been prepared in a transitional context (i.e. designation and establishment of new teams of European Commissioners as from end 2014) where the responsibilities for VET have been transferred from DG EAC to DG EMPL. Against this background, the Commission agreed that the ultimate objective of the study would be to identify whether and where there are potential opportunities for EU strategic considerations and action in the area.

2 Approach and methodology

This section presents the approach and methodology followed for the purpose of the study in terms of:

- The objectives of the study
- The scope of the study
- The methodology

2.1 Objectives of the study

The study has been carried out by ICF International (ICF hereafter) jointly with DTI (Danish Technological Institute), 3s and Technopolis between January and November 2014.

In light of Commission's requirements outlined above, the study had the following purposes:

- To map policies and practices carried out by individual EU/EFTA Member States (and Australia) which area aimed to support/foster international cooperation (i.e. with third countries) in the VET sector;
- To offer insights on key strategies and initiatives undertaken in the area by five international organisations (ASEM, ILO, OECD, UNESCO and the World Bank);
- To identify what works well or hinders international cooperation in VET as well as key success factors, and;
- To identify whether, where and how the EU could intervene to support the above and issue a set of key recommendations for future developments at EU, national and practitioners' level.

2.2 Scope of the study

In the framework of the study, international cooperation in VET is understood as:

- Bilateral cooperation initiated by individual **EU/EFTA Member States**²⁷ (and Australia²⁸) with **third countries** (developed or emerging)²⁹ in the VET sector;
- Strategies and initiatives led by the five **international organisations** covered in the area.

Scope

The study focuses on cooperation examples at **initial VET (IVET)**. These may be at:

- VET upper secondary level or;
- VET at higher levels (in particular post-secondary technical courses outside higher education study programmes at ISCED 5B level (professional-oriented higher education short cycles)).

Examples in the field of **continuing VET (CVET)** have not been the core focus of the study but were collated when considered of particular relevance.

²⁷ i.e. EU 28 Member States plus Iceland, Norway and Switzerland. Liechtenstein has not been covered.

²⁸ Australia is the only third country covered for which a country fiche has been produced as part of the study. Australia is an example of country which has gained significant experience in international cooperation in VET, thus a potentially inspiring case for the EU or individual European countries.

²⁹ Among which United States, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, Japan, South Korea, Russian Federation, Turkey, Brazil, Mexico, China, Hong Kong, Taiwan, India, Singapore, Thailand, Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines, South Africa (not exhaustive).

Other types of VET at higher levels (i.e. at ISCED 5A level, as from Bachelor programmes) are excluded from this study.

In terms of **types of cooperation**, the study has targeted all main possible forms of cooperation in the sector except those strictly falling under the remit of development cooperation³⁰.

The types of cooperation activities covered usually relate to:

- Development, coordination and/or implementation of international VET policy
- Institutional capacity building to public authorities/ Technical Assistance, including on VET standards and qualification systems
- Development and management of international networks of VET institutes (exchange of information and joint projects)
- Certification and quality assurance of VET provision abroad
- Marketing of VET providers and business development
- Mobility programmes
- Research, information sharing and networking
- Development of training systems, curricula, and education equipment.
- For the purpose of the study, these have been clustered into three main groups:
- Cooperation at policy level
- Cooperation with and between VET organisations (education institutions and companies)
- Cooperation targeted at individuals
- Other

For the purpose of the study, these have been clustered into three main groups:

- Cooperation at policy level
- Cooperation with and between VET organisations (education institutions and companies)
- Cooperation targeted at individuals
- Other

Examples in the field of **internationalisation of VET at home** have not been the core focus of the study but were collated when considered of particular relevance.

With regard to **policies**, the study differentiates countries with:

- **Strategies** which support international cooperation in VET (i.e. defining a clear vision of cooperation in the area, key priority actions, key actors involved in the process, etc.) and;
- **Diversity of actions:** separate policy documents supporting actions in the area either in very general terms or focusing on specific sub-sectors of VET or trade sectors.
- **No specific or marginal policies**

³⁰ i.e. activities aimed at poverty reduction first and foremost and conducted within a clear development mandate. In the inception phase of the study, the fact that the border between development aid and VET initiatives may be often blurred was acknowledged and discussed with DG EAC. The approach followed for the purpose of the study has been to primarily concentrate on cooperation in VET with industrialised and emerging countries (developed ones being considered as primarily targeted by cooperation aid initiatives). The second delimitation has been to exclude any initiatives strictly focusing on cooperation aid.

2.3 Methodology

The methodological approach followed for the study was built on a combination of:

- **Data collection** (desk-research and interviews) and;
- **Data analysis, validation and reporting tasks.**

The research and analytical work has been undertaken over three subsequent phases:

- **Phase 1 – Inception:** the objective of this phase was to further develop the research framework for the study, to design the data collection tools and to present a detailed methodology to the European Commission (EC).
- **Phase 2 – Research:** this phase has consisted of collecting descriptive qualitative and quantitative data on the topic at national level (in form of country fiches) and at multilateral level (international organisations fiches- see details below). These initial research outputs were complemented later with the collection of qualitative in-depth information and its analysis in form of case studies;
- **Phase 3 – Analysis and validation of results:** in this phase the data from country/international organisations fiches and case studies was processed and analysed for the purpose of the comparative analysis. During this phase, a half-day 'validation workshop' was organised by the study team jointly with the Commission. Its main purpose was to present the key findings of the study and discuss recommendations for future developments in the area at EU and national level.

Over the whole lifetime of the project, the study core team has regularly liaised and met with DG EAC/DG EMPL, produced four main subsequent reports (Inception, Interim, draft final and final reports) and delivered these to them for approval. As noted above, the study was informed by the outputs listed in the box below.

What the study did

Between January and September 2014, the research team has produced:

- **32 country fiches** (EU/EFTA countries and Australia) aimed at mapping country-level information on the topic
- **5 international organisations fiches** (OECD, UNESCO, ILO, World Bank and ASEM) outlining information on key strategies and initiatives on the topic;
- **7 in-depth case studies** to get insights on and analyse views/perspectives on the topic by key actors and to identify key success factors for internationalising VET.

In November 2014, this above was complemented with:

- A **workshop** with key stakeholders (at national and international organisations level) to analyse the relevant information, share knowledge and expertise on what works, obstacles and what the EU could do to support international cooperation in VET.

2.3.1 Country-level mapping

International cooperation may be governed and influenced within a country through different types of measures including policies and practices. The first task of the study was to map information on: the main features and objectives of these measures (if any); the key drivers for action; the geographical and sectoral scope of VET cooperation; the type of cooperation activities and key actors as well as the main obstacles faced at individual country level.

The country-level mapping has been informed by an initial desk research which allowed the study team to gather already existing information on the topic across EU/EFTA

Member States, start compiling relevant information for the draft country sheets and identify gaps in information.

The task built on the examination of the:

- Legislation, policies/strategies in the field of VET or where existing focusing specifically on international cooperation in VET; national reports, academic papers, presentations, etc.
- Websites of different ministries and agencies involved in international cooperation;
- International studies, analysis and documents (European Commission, UNESCO, OECD, ILO, World Bank, ASEM, etc.).

Preliminary findings were discussed with the European Commission at an early stage (early 2014). The core team subsequently piloted two country fiches which were sent to the latter in January 2014. The proposed structure was presented and agreed by then.

Structure of the country fiches

- Summary box outlining key trends from the fiche and type of VET covered
- Strategy / framework for action, incl. drivers
- Geographical scope of VET cooperation
- Sectoral scope of VET cooperation
- Types of cooperation activities, actors, and specific initiatives (distinguishing public/private initiatives where applicable as well country's action within International organisations)
- Issues and obstacles
- Sources of information

Desk research was pursued to collate information for the other EU/EFTA countries between February and March 2014. The work has been carried by a team of country researchers experienced with educational topics and possessing appropriate linguistic skills to review sources in the national language where necessary.

Country researchers were supported in their work by a guidance note (and a topic guide for interviews) designed by the core team and approved by DG EAC. Due to the complexity and novelty of the topic, the general approach has been to ask country researchers to map as much relevant information as they could find without giving them too narrow definition of international cooperation in VET. The findings were later on analysed to develop categories (e.g. typologies of policies approaches or of cooperation activities) for the purpose of the comparative analysis.

The country mapping was also informed by phone interviews with key stakeholders. Those have included:

- Staff members in charge of policy or programme development in 'VET internationalisation' in relevant Ministries (Ministries of Education, higher education, innovation and research, economy, etc.)
- Representations of public educational centres (e.g. in charge of qualifications and VET development or programme management)
- Representatives of national associations of VET providers/single VET providers: Representatives of the business sector
- Other (NGOs, foundations)

The interviews were aimed to validate and complement the information obtained through desk research and assembled in the draft fiches. These also helped identify additional sources of information, relevant practice examples or key stakeholders' contact details.

Since the level of attention given to the topic, activity and information available may greatly vary depending on countries, our approach has been to carry out between 1 to 5

interviews according to the level of activity of individual countries. In total, **70 interviews** were carried out. At a later stage (July-September), the interviewees were offered the possibility to add or amend the country fiches where needed. The country fiches are annexed to this report (see Annex 1 - supplied separately to this report).

2.3.2 International organisations fiches

Mapping information on the main strategies and initiatives carried out by five international organisations (ASEM, ILO, OECD, UNESCO and the World Bank) has been the second task of the study. Its main purpose was to gain insights on their respective understanding of the topic, strategic priorities as well as commonalities and differences among them. The exercise was also meant to identify inspiring practices, potential overlaps and areas where cooperation with EU could be reinforced or initiated in the future.

The approach to produce these fiches has been similar to their country counterparts: building on desk research (mainly focusing on organisations' websites and key documents issued by them in the area) and phone interviews (with at least one representative involved in strategic development or initiative management within each organisation covered).

The researchers have used the following tools to produce these fiches:

- A common template for the international organisations fiches
- A topic guide for interviews – which has been already circulated to the European Commission and approved.

Structure of the international organisations fiches

- Summary box outlining key trends and data from the fiche
- Background information on the international organisation
- International organisation's framework for international cooperation in VET
- Examples of initiatives
- Conclusions and policy pointers
- Sources of information (literature and name of interviewees)

In total **8 interviewees** (mostly consisting of senior level representatives in charge of VET or internationalisation policies in the respective organisations) were contacted over the phone.

Similarly with the approach followed with the country fiches, these interviewees helped the study team validate or complement initial findings. The fiches were produced between April and end of May (except this on ILO which was completed in September).

The interviewees were also offered the possibility to comment on or amend the draft fiches. The process is still to be completed in a few cases at the time the present report is being finalised.

The international organisations fiches are annexed to this report (Annex 2).

2.3.3 Case studies

The above was complemented with seven in-depth case studies (see Annex 3).

Their purpose has been to provide detailed insights for each of the initiatives considered on:

- Motivations and rationale for engaging in international cooperation in VET within the selected countries
- Objectives and related actions
- Results and impacts
- Success factors
- Barriers and obstacles

The unit of analysis for the case studies was a programme, sub-programme or an initiative taking place in one EU/EFTA country. The data collection activities within the case studies comprised desk research and interviews.

The case studies were selected on the basis of a number of criteria:

- **Remit:** the initiatives had to clearly support international cooperation in VET (and exclude projects for development aid notably);
- **Geographical coverage:** the initiatives had to be spread over different EU/EFTA countries amongst the most experienced in the area and also cover diverse third countries as key targeted ones (including both industrialised and emerging ones to the extent possible);
- **Public/private:** the initiatives had to comprise both publicly- and privately-led examples;
- **Target groups:** the initiatives had to cover different target groups including policy makers/public authorities, VET providers and individuals;
- **Type of cooperation:** the initiatives had to cover a balanced of types of cooperation activities – in line with the categorisation set out above;
- **Targeted sectors:** the initiatives had to cover different targeted economic sectors.

The seven case studies produced (between July-September 2014) are distributed as follows:

- **Cooperation at policy level initiatives:** 3
- **Cooperation initiatives with and between VET organisations:** 2
- **Cooperation aimed at individuals:** 2

Table 1. List of case studies produced

Country	Name of the initiative	Category of the initiative	Sub-category of the initiative
DK	Public support to US-DK partnership on VET	Cooperation policy level and at VET provider level	at Policy dialogue at strategic level and bilateral cooperation between VET institutions leading to capacity-building
DE	GOVET	Cooperation policy level	at Central contact point / "one-stop shop" for national and international VET stakeholders interested in international cooperation in VET
DE	German-Thai dual excellence education programme (<i>already selected</i>)	Cooperation policy level	at Technical assistance and capacity-building leading to the transfer of EU/EFTA VET standards or processes
FR	Technical teachers without borders programme (with is integrated within the "Campus Pro International centers of excellence in technical training" programme)	Cooperation aimed at individuals	Outbound mobility of VET teachers who provided technical assistance and capacity-building leading to the transfer of EU/EFTA VET standards or processes
UK	The International Skills Partnerships (British Council)	Cooperation initiatives with and between VET organisations	Bilateral cooperation between VET institutions leading to capacity-building
AT	Projects on education and	Cooperation	Bilateral cooperation between VET

Country	Name of the initiative	Category of the initiative	Sub-category of the initiative
	training in hospitality and tourism led by the MODUL tourism school	initiatives with and institutions leading to VET delivery and capacity-building	
CH	Swiss exchange programme for young people in dual-track apprenticeship organised by the AFS organisation	Cooperation aimed at individuals	Outbound mobility of students

Semi-structured phone interviews were conducted with **27 interviewees** including:

- Project leaders (in the country of origin and in the target country – or at least in one of the target countries if several are targeted)
- Representatives from beneficiary institutions/bodies.

Depending on the initiative, these stakeholders comprised staff members from the following:

- Ministry(ies) in charge of VET or other relevant ones (person(s) responsible for international cooperation activities)
- National representations to the EU for the third countries to be covered (person(s) responsible for VET and/or international cooperation activities)
- National agencies or other public bodies responsible for international activities in the field of VET (e.g. funding agencies, etc.).
- Embassies, delegations of chambers of commerce in the third countries
- VET providers
- Enterprises, etc.

Structure of case studies fiches

- Context/rationale
- Objectives of the project
- Actors and practical arrangements
- Impact (beneficiaries) and results
- Conclusions/Strengths
- Sources of information

For a matter of confidentiality, the information supplied in the different research materials listed above have been anonymised for the purpose of the public version of this report.

3 Foreword to the comparative analysis

The methodological approach and resulting outputs outlined above have been designed to help gain insights on the state of play in international cooperation in VET at national and international organisations levels. Their purpose has been more specifically to get evidence to inform the following:

- Why international cooperation in VET?
- What (and how) is happening in the field?
- What are the barriers/obstacles and success factors?
- What can the EU do in the area?

3.1 Why international cooperation in VET?

Mapping the state of play in the area firstly required to get a better understanding of the main purposes, motivation and drivers that commonly lead countries to engage in international cooperation in the sector (i.e. at both leading and beneficiary countries levels). The ultimate purpose was to shed the light on the specificities, commonalities and differences of the above also in terms of expected benefits for the different actors involved (where possible). This task also allowed to identify common reasons or factors leading on the contrary countries not to take part in this type of cooperation.

3.2 What (and how) is happening in the field?

A second important axis of the mapping exercise and resulting analysis was to gain insights on whether any specific attention is given to the topic in individual EU/EFTA³¹ countries as well as across the five international organisations covered, and if so how.

At country level, the approach followed has been to firstly identify whether the topic receives any support at policy level and if so what form this takes from one country to another. The data collected allowed to cluster the countries into three main categories: countries with an adopted or planned strategy³²; countries with a diversity of actions and countries with marginal or no specific actions.

The exercise has furthermore consisted of identifying practices examples in the area, clustering these into four main categories (cooperation activities at policy level; cooperation with and between VET organisations; cooperation aimed at individuals and information exchange and awareness raising) and mapping/analysing key trends from these. These findings have been complemented by those from the in-depth case studies focusing on successful initiatives examples.

At international organisations level, the extent to which the topic is present on the agenda of the five organisations covered and if so what its main features are has been considered. This allowed to distinguish the main commonalities and differences among individual organisations' strategic approach in the area. Key examples of initiatives supported by each organisation have been also mapped and analysed.

3.3 What are the barriers/obstacles and success factors?

Getting a deeper understanding of both limiting and success factors (i.e. what is detrimental to given type(s) of initiative and where possible what solutions have been designed to address specific issues; knowing what works well in the area and why, etc.) to effective engagement in international cooperation has been a further important dimension of the study.

³¹ Liechtenstein has not been covered.

³² i.e. understood as an overarching strategy clearly focusing on the internationalisation of the VET sector (see details in section 5).

The review of the data collected at both national and international organisations level helped map and analyse key findings in these areas. The in-depth case studies which offer further insights in this area were used to refine our initial findings.

This set of findings subsequently helped identify areas where an EU intervention could be both legitimate and useful for supporting further actions on its own and/or to complement existing initiatives undertaken at national as well as international organisations level.

3.4 What can the EU do in the area?

The ultimate purpose of the study was to identify whether, where and how the EU could intervene to support future developments in the area at EU and national level. These concluding findings were primarily aimed to supply the European Commission with fresh insights so as to support their reflection towards achieving the Bruges Communiqué's strategic vision.

For this purpose the above findings have been further assembled and analysed and assessed against the current strengths and capabilities the EU has in the area of VET, the areas where it could intervene (explaining why and how and what its added value would be). These were presented and further discussed with key stakeholders during a validation workshop held at the end of the lifetime of the assignment. This ultimate exchange allowed the study team to put together a set of recommendations for future developments in the area.

The above has been addressed through the following sections which include the following:

- Overview of the most commonly encountered **drivers and obstacles** for engaging in international cooperation in VET: **section 5**.
- Key findings of the **country-level mapping** in **sections 6 and 7**: these respectively focus on existing policy support (i.e. countries' policy frameworks for international cooperation in VET) and types of initiatives and some evidence of their results. An analysis of the success factors in the area can be found in section 7.
- Key findings of the **international organisations-level mapping** are presented in **section 8**. Information on the commonalities and differences in the approaches followed by the five international organisations considered in the area of international cooperation in VET as well as examples of relevant initiatives supported by each of them can be found there.
- A summary of the state of play on the topic at both national and international organisations levels and considerations on specificities of and potential added value of the EU in the area are supplied in the **conclusions** set out in **section 9**.
- A set of **recommendations** for future actions in the area at EU and national level supplied in **section 10**.

4 Drivers and obstacles for engaging in international cooperation in VET

Based on the findings from country fiches, international organisation fiches and case studies, the main drivers behind international cooperation in VET are related to globalisation and its results. In the face of heightened competition to attract foreign investments and human capital, countries' competitiveness depends also on the quality and skill-set of their labour force and of workers which serve their companies abroad. In third countries this is often accompanied by demographic pressure and a considerable mismatch between VET offer and labour market needs.

Figure 1 gives an overview of the concrete drivers and obstacles identified in the countries analysed.

Figure 1. Overview of main drivers and obstacles identified



Source: ICF own research

4.1 Drivers

This section focuses on findings in those countries where there are strategies or substantial activities for cooperation with third countries in the field of VET (see section 4). It differentiates between drivers and obstacles for the EU/EFTA countries (as well as Australia) and those observed in the third countries.

4.1.1 Strategic drivers for the countries covered (EU/EFTA countries and Australia)

The study identified five main reasons why EU countries decide to develop international cooperation in VET.

Firstly, the countries aim to strengthen and promote, at international level, the **positioning and recognition of their own VET systems, qualifications and certificates**. This goes in hand with the willingness to promote their country as an attractive location for education, training and business. Expanding the student base is a source of revenue for VET providers. This was the case for the Viennese tourism and hospitality school MODUL (AT), as revealed by the case study on the school's bilateral cooperation activities with third countries. In the longer term the transfer of a particular VET model sets a standard upon which further VET and industrial services (e.g. technological transfer) can be developed (AT, AU, CH, DE, NL). The case studies showed that in the case of the Viennese tourism and hospitality school MODUL and the partners who took part in the British Council-led International Skills Partnerships, cooperation in

VET was also seen as a way to 'open future doors' in partner countries for home companies.

In countries leading in the field, strategy-level actors, such as ministries, have picked up on the commercial and strategic potential of exporting a particular VET model (or parts of it), in terms of standard-setting in other countries. For example the German-Thai dual excellence education programme (GTee) is part of a wider international strategy to introduce dual elements in VET in the ASEAN region.

The extent to which VET-provider level initiatives to position themselves have been supported by system-level actors varies depending on the perception of VET at home. Whilst global positioning was a strong driver identified in the two cases in Germany (GOVET and the GTee programme), it was comparatively less so the case for on the "Technical teachers without borders programme" (with is integrated within the "Campus Pro International centres of excellence in technical training" programme) in France. Indeed despite an effective system, VET has lower prestige to higher education in France and thus comparatively less attention has been given to its international cooperation. The box below substantiates some of the above-mentioned findings with evidence from the case studies on GOVET in Germany and on the international consultancy offer (the so called "Austrian MODUL Service Platform") of the of the Viennese tourism and hospitality school MODUL, and its work with Advantage Austria.

Evidence from the case studies

- Germany has deployed substantial efforts to maintain and strengthen Germany leadership in international cooperation in VET. In response to previously (sometimes) poorly coordinated international support in VET, the German Office for International Cooperation in VET, known as GOVET, was set-up to improve the coherence and visibility of the variety of German actors active in the field of international cooperation in VET. GOVET operates on behalf of the Federal Government. It is the administrative body of the Round Tables for international VET cooperation³³, which are to act as an inter-ministerial coordinating mechanism, following the reception of requests for international cooperation in VET (In practice the Round Tables act as a frame for inter-ministerial strategic prioritisation to ensure notably that GOVET support abroad is aligned to broader strategic federal level policy objectives). GOVET is thus intended to act as one-stop-shop for national and foreign stakeholders interested in support in VET and as a clearing-house to decide which German actors should be mobilised. GOVET is also in charge of the central knowledge management system on international cooperation in VET³⁴.
- The Viennese tourism and hospitality school MODUL has developed an international consultancy offer to foreign VET providers. It does so by delivering seminars, 'train the trainer' activities, development of education programs and accreditation of tourism schools. It also cooperates with universities in Luzern, Den Haag and Australia on the recognition of its students' achievements within its International Course in Hotel Management (ICHM). MODUL also works with Advantage Austria³⁵ to promote its VET offer abroad and support international students with the ICHM programme. Graduates of MODUL ICHM are also expected to become "ambassadors" of the MODUL tourism school.

³³ Also newly-established under the German Federal 2013 strategy for international VET cooperation.

³⁴ Securing knowledge transfer; Drawing up country dossiers etc.

³⁵ Austrian Foreign Trade Promotion Organisation of the Austrian Chamber of Commerce.

Related to the driver of “global positioning”, another, more pragmatic, driver for the development of internationalisation strategies in VET, is the **willingness to coordinate activities that mushroomed in the past** based on local and bottom-up initiatives. Such coordination and related strategic targeting should enhance the impact of internationalisation of VET (e.g. DE, UK). Finally, some countries openly recognise that they **don’t want to ‘miss the train’** (e.g. CH, FR and NL). They see that some countries, such as Germany are becoming leaders in this area of cooperation which has a range of positive spin off effects on the country, its image but also the positioning of its industries. These countries recognise the necessity to identify new sources of revenue including for their own VET system as well as to strategically position their country, at international level, alongside others, as a reference in VET.

At the same time, countries, often driven by the demand from companies, want to strengthen the **supply of a skilled and globally-aware labour force**. This is a two way relationship. On the one hand they want to make sure that graduates in their own countries are ready to work in an international context (participation to outbound mobility programmes, to VET courses at home which integrate foreign languages, intercultural competence and understanding etc.). On the other hand there is an effort to support the position of their companies abroad by making sure they have access to sufficiently qualified labour. There is evidence in the case of certain initiatives, i.e. Campus Pro initiative, German-Thai dual excellence education (GTee) programme, that engagement in international cooperation was mainly driven by the interests of companies looking for qualified human capital.

Evidence from the case studies

- Under the Campus Pro Programme – example of Dassault-CPUT- French Ministry of education LCMCC at Cape Peninsula University of Technology’s (CPUT) in Cape Town, the possibility to host a state-of-the-art training centre motivated CPUT’s participation, also considering its strategic objectives of developing operational and readily-employable graduates, proficient in using technological tools to effect.
- Under the AFS³⁶ organised exchanges year for apprentices (CH), Swiss companies which participate in the AFS-organised year abroad considered that offering their apprentices this international opportunity would make them more attractive in comparison to other companies to which students may apply to for apprenticeships. The experience and skills acquired by the apprentice abroad also benefits the sending companies upon the apprentice’s return.

Modernisation of their own VET systems is another motivation. Countries that engage in international cooperation in VET want to make sure their VET system and VET schools are in line with the innovations and technological developments in a given sector worldwide. They aim to integrate international technological and knowledge innovations into teaching at home (FR, DE, NL and UK). They also want to make sure that the VET offer is responsive to industry’s needs and that VET graduates are operational once they join the job market and can easily find employment and be growth factors for employers. This objective has underlay all seven initiatives which were the subject of a case study. Some examples are provided in the box below.

³⁶ AFS is an international, voluntary, non-governmental, non-profit organisation that provides intercultural learning opportunities to help people develop the knowledge, skills and understanding needed to create a more just and peaceful world. <http://www.afs.org>

Evidence from the case studies

Mutual learning

Under the US-DK partnership on VET, cooperation was seen as a way to engage with more advanced partners or peers and thus to upgrade skillsets or a VET offer at home or abroad. The US-DK partnership on VET - a fully institutionalised bilateral cooperation partnership- was first set up to initiate mutual learning and exchanges of best practices between American community colleges and Danish VET schools, e.g. on innovation through digital learning technologies, on the US community college system which, in its role in continuing VET, engages actively in local economic development and technology diffusion, but also in its outreach activities, such as 'demo centres'³⁷. Actions put in place in view of mutual learning have been joint activities such as annual transatlantic conferences, comparative US-DK studies, VET staff exchanges or study or training periods abroad, and joint pilot projects, e.g. cooperation on credentialing systems, inspired by the European qualification frameworks; developments in the integration of certificates in the USA in community college curriculum; and Danish developments in recognition and validation on prior learning.

Capacity-building to make VET more relevant to employers' needs:

The British Council-sponsored International Skills Partnerships aim to initiate innovative projects skills development that meets industry needs. It does so by bringing together skills' stakeholders from different countries to collaborate within a one year consortium composed of employers, sector skills organisations, awarding bodies, training providers, universities, ministries, and skills agencies. Activities supported under the ISPs addressed curriculum development, quality assurance and employer engagement, labour market information, careers guidance, entrepreneurship, or teacher training, across a range of thematic areas and sectors.

Factors which determine the extent to which drivers will be followed. Some countries are more likely to engage in international cooperation in VET than others. This depends on a combination of factors.

Countries which have **already strongly developed international cooperation** with third countries are more likely to engage in internationalisation of VET than others. This is in particular the case for countries that have national industries operating abroad with substantial scope and volume of their operations being in third countries (e.g. FR, UK, DE, NL, IT, NO). Norway for instance cooperates with oil and gas producing emerging countries to develop local skills (e.g. in welding, hydraulics and maintenance) to match the needs of its companies. In line with this, countries with open economies strongly dependent on global trade are also active in this area (DK, NL).

For example the Danish economy is made up mainly of small and medium enterprises (SMEs) which operate as advanced sub-suppliers in global value chains. As such technical vocational skills, advanced digital skills, and soft skills such as cooperation and communication, including in foreign languages, are in high demand. In Cyprus, the importance of Russian and Turkish investments and nationals or tourists in the island has prompted VET institutions to develop courses including Russian and Turkish language classes (e.g. in tourism but also in financial and accounting courses). The tradition of diplomatic relations, the presence of the country in third countries through its embassies is a clear factor that matters (DE, FR, UK). Linked to this, countries' choice of third country partners is related to their colonial past and existing zones of influence (e.g.

³⁷ Where micro companies can come and learn for example about 3D printing technologies or about advanced robotics.

Mediterranean region for FR and IT, South-East Asia and Commonwealth countries for UK, Brazil and Angola for PT).

The **extent to which VET is valued in country** also determines whether international cooperation in VET will be started. In Austria, Germany, and in Switzerland VET is an important element of national educational systems. Reversely, whilst France's VET system is effective, it is poorly promoted on account of its lower prestige in comparison to higher education. The fact that VET is recognised as a tool to improve human capital, companies' competitiveness and fight unemployment is a factor of attraction for partner countries. The German dual VET system has for example considered as one factor in Germany's distinctively good economic performance during the global economic crisis. Considering all of the above, the countries which joined the EU more recently (e.g. CZ, BG, HR, HU, RO, SI), which have recently worked on their own reform and EU integration processes, have not deployed any substantial resources to develop strong and wide-ranging international cooperation with third countries.

4.1.2 Strategic drivers for third countries

For third countries, engaging in international cooperation in VET has been an opportunity to access an EU/EFTA-inspired education and to benefit from knowledge and experience transfer, hence to raise overall quality in VET³⁸. This in turn addresses current challenges such as youth employment and demographic pressure (e.g. MENA³⁹ countries, India, Central and Latin America), which can be a source of social instability (e.g. MENA countries, Central and Latin America), ill-adapted VET to markets' needs (e.g. MENA countries, Asia) and a high demand for specialised workers (e.g. South East Asia, e.g. Vietnam).

The below presents evidence of how international cooperation activities contributed to the supply for European companies of qualified workforce in Third countries.

Evidence from the case studies

- Swiss companies participate in the AFS-organised year abroad to send apprenticeship students to countries of strategic value to them and ensure a supply of qualified workforce.
- Dassault identified South Africa as a country where the use of its software technology by its customers was hindered by the labour force's lack of skills in the concept of life cycle management and also in the relevant software. The training centre thus addressed this need. In addition it acts as a show-casing tool of the possibilities offered by the concept of life cycle management for different industries present in country.

Another driver has been the perceived opportunity to **learn from best or different practices**. This is what has motivated the numerous foreign requests for international cooperation in VET received by German actors, as the German dual VET system has been widely recognised as a factor of the country's comparatively healthier economy than the rest of the EU. The box below presents examples from the case studies.

³⁸ Raising VET quality can be seen as an overarching driver that may concern most of least advanced third countries. In a vast proportion of these, research commonly denotes increasing participation rates in education in contexts where the quality of educational provision often lags behind. In this sense, there are potentially clear benefits for most of these countries to take part in international cooperation in the sector.

³⁹ Middle East and North African countries.

Evidence from the case studies

- The German and the French Campus Pro initiatives involved EU companies in the design and provision of work-process oriented training in emerging countries on the basis of national VET standards and process as well as equipment, techniques or services produced or sold by their national companies abroad. Both types of foreign inputs upgraded the existing national curricula on the basis of EU industrial knowledge and practices.
- The opportunity of engaging in mutual learning was one of the motives for setting-up of the US-DK partnership on VET at policy and practitioner level.
- The Cape Peninsula University of Technology's (CPUT) in South Africa was keen to host a Product Lifecycle Management Competence Centre under the Campus Pro programme for the following reasons: CPUT was attracted by the new approach of teaching based on the integrated Product Life Cycle management approach, (reportedly a major conceptual improvement) and by the opportunity to use state-of-the-art systems which would have been unaffordable otherwise.
- The one-year British Council grant-supported International Skills Partnerships provide initial support and impetus to building connections between EU and foreign organisations on innovative approaches to skills development. Incentives in participating for UK Skills organisations lay in the possibility to share valid experience and for Egyptian skills organisations to learn how skills standards are designed in the UK and adapt to their own situation and needs.

4.2 Obstacles⁴⁰

Countries which do not have a strategy or any substantial actions in favour of international cooperation in VET often combine several of these reasons for not investing into this new territory:

- They are themselves undergoing or continuing a 'Europeanisation' process in VET and are currently still 'beneficiaries' of support in the area of VET. This is the case of countries in central and Eastern Europe as well as some of the Mediterranean countries. This group of countries generally cooperates in VET with EU countries, mainly Austria and Germany, and on occasion with international countries such as Canada for example.
- Amongst countries whose VET systems are well-established and are not receiving any external support, some cooperate with direct neighbours or with other EU countries only, (and not third countries). This is the case of some of the small countries with small VET systems (like Luxembourg).
- VET has a poor reputation in country and its promotion in-country is the first priority. This was mentioned in different countries where VET is not a popular option for students.
- Lack of public funds despite existing expertise and international cooperation activities in the past was also mentioned in particular in countries that underwent substantial budget cuts recently;
- VET cooperation is conducted within development cooperation;

⁴⁰ This sub-section focuses on the obstacles commonly reported by the different EU/EFTA countries covered as well as Australia. The equivalent at third countries level (i.e. as above) has not been explored.

- Their internationalisation efforts are focused on higher education.

Key organisations in these countries often also show limited interest in this issue. This can be attributed to the fact that emphasis is being put on addressing internal issues and reforms in VET at national level or that the country is not a strong commercial player worldwide. This also results in low experience in international cooperation among organisations engaged in VET and hinders development of activities (BG, CY, CZ, EE, HR, LV, SI and IS).

Even in countries which have some level of activity in this area, a number of obstacles have been identified which hinder the development of a more strategic framework. The lack of **clear attention** given at **policy level** to the topic is often reported (e.g. BEfr, LT, PL, SE and NO) as well as the absence of a **common vocabulary** on the topic.

The **fragmentation** of the sector (i.e. next to a few large scale actions, there is a large number of small and medium scale initiatives of different nature) also commonly adds to that above. This fragmentation hampers coordinated actions as it often leads to duplication of efforts on the ground, lack of visibility of who is doing what in the sector and the difficulty for grassroots organisations (VET providers) or for companies to understand existing activities. These observations were denoted in several country fiches (e.g. FR, IT, NO, and UK).

This goes in hand with the **lack of coordinated approaches** among key stakeholders (i.e. each of them sticking on their own priorities and not showing openness to review their approaches or foster collaboration with other active players).

There are other obstacles that negatively affect growth and further development of existing activities. These predominantly include **funding issues** at both central and VET provider level. In a vast majority of countries (BE, CY, EL, EE, DE, FI, HU, IS, NL, NO, PL, RO, SE and SK) the economic crisis and resulting budget cuts in several policy areas, including VET have exacerbated the trend. At provider level, the 'return on investment' (i.e. an activity which can improve quality, relationships with partner companies, and generate income for the best performers, etc.) for international cooperation activities fails to be clearly perceived in many countries too.

The **lack of comprehensive data and evidence** on what is going on in the area within and among the countries is another major obstacle. Among the countries that have gained much experience in the domain (DE, DK, CH and UK and FR to a lesser extent), little quantitative data (e.g. on uptake, budget, etc.) is available. In most cases, one of the main challenges in this area is linked to the fact the organisations themselves do not know who does what - and therefore cannot build on this. Another issue may be the lack of understanding on what the targets (if any) are in the area. This gap is referred to in the Danish fiche that highlights that 'a formulated institutional strategy with clear and measurable targets is a key to internationalisation'.

In addition to the above, some further distinctions are found between those countries that have limited to some experience with international cooperation in VET and most experienced ones.

Among those countries with limited experience⁴¹ main emphasis is put on the **absence of a strategic framework** and/or an overall **lack of coordinated actions/structures**. In several of those of these cases (comprising at least the eight countries which fall under the category 'diversity of actions'), this does not mean necessarily that the countries are not interested in the topic but do not offer yet a supporting environment

⁴¹ This group brings together 24 countries among which 8 where a 'diversity of actions' is found in the area (AT, BE, FI, IT, NO, PL, SE) and the remaining where no specific or marginal action is encountered (BG, CY, CZ, EE, EL, ES, HR, HU, IE, IS, LT, LU, LV, PT, RO, SI and SK).

that would help VET practitioners and other key stakeholders to foster actions in the area. In most cases, a deeper research would be needed to assess the extent to which those countries do envisage to develop such structures in the future though.

The fragmented nature of international cooperation activities led by individual VET providers is reported in several cases - and in HU, PL, SE and NO in particular as reflected below.

International cooperation by VET providers: fragmented by nature

- **Hungary:** there are on-going initiatives to foster international cooperation in VET, but they are rather fragmented. Since international cooperation in VET it is not seen as a high priority yet, coupled with the scarce funding sources available (only from EU programmes, hardly any available at national level), broader engagement - in terms of number of students and VET providers involved - in a more systematic approach is to be expected only at longer term.
- **Norway:** many VET providers still need to incorporate a coherent and consistent internationalisation strategy in their overall strategy. International activities at the upper secondary VET level are often driven by individuals, making the efforts too fragmented.
- **Sweden:** by more or less decentralising the responsibility of internationalisation to the individual VET providers, the level of effort varies greatly between schools. The international activities and the use of the support programmes are mainly driven by head teachers and teachers at the individual school, some more enthusiastic than others. Essentially, this has made the efforts too fragmented.

The **geographical location/isolation** may be a further factor hampering international cooperation (i.e. at the level of learners/teaching staff mobility) as two countries (FI and IS) reveal.

Country's geographical location hampers international cooperation

- **Finland:** the remote location of Finland deters students from beyond Europe from coming to Finland, as students at the upper secondary level are relatively young and many parents hesitate to send their children so far away for a long period of time.
- **Iceland:** the geographical isolation of Iceland is an obstacle to VET internationalisation, as it restricts student mobility to some degree. It is costly to travel to and from Iceland, and students in upper secondary VET tend to be relatively young many VET providers still need to incorporate a coherent and consistent internationalisation strategy in their overall strategy. International activities at the upper secondary VET level are often driven by individuals, making the efforts too fragmented.

Language issues are also noted in two cases (FI and LT). These rather relate to the concept of home internationalisation⁴² which is seen as an important pre-condition to enhance international cooperation (in FI and NO in particular). Information supplied for Finland suggests that the country fails to be much attractive at the time being as there is too few English programmes at upper secondary VET level. In Lithuania, on-going Law on

⁴² The concept of internationalisation at home has gained in prominence to underline the fact that there are ways to internationalise higher education that do not necessitate mobility. http://archive.www.iau-aiu.net/internationalization/i_definitions.html

VET stipulates that all VET programmes must be delivered in Lithuanian – which may be an obstacle for the participation of foreign students in the VET programmes in the country.

Within those countries (DE, CH, DK, NL, AU as well as FR and UK) which have gained much experience in the area, the study identified six further specific obstacles.

Increasing competition from new types of providers (e.g. multi-national companies that operate across the world) and new ways of delivering education internationally (e.g. e-learning) is one of those. Several country fiches (e.g., UK and AU) report that this rising in prominence both within and among countries. The Australian Strategic Framework for international engagement by the Australian VET sector (2007-2011) notes for instance that the country is 'faced with increasing competition from traditional competitors (Germany, United Kingdom and United States) as well as emerging suppliers (Japan, Malaysia and Singapore)'. This relates, to some extent, to the need to have a **strategic engagement** of the national VET sector with other key stakeholders aligned with local needs, providers' goals and based on solid business considerations (as reflected in DE and AU fiches).

Legal/visa barriers⁴³ issues relating to the visa systems and policies are also commonly reported (DK, DE, UK and AU). In Australia, it is felt that changes to the national visa system and policies have the potential to change the nature of the international student market in particular countries or for particular sectors. Increases in the cost of the visa process can be also a deterrent for some applicants. In Denmark, other types of legal barriers are reported. The first one regards the difficulty to obtain a work permit for students wishing to take part of their apprentice period in a company abroad (as in the U.S. for instance). The second applies to Danish VET institutions that are not allowed to issue Danish upper secondary vocational degrees abroad.

In line with the above, the lack of clarity of **regulator roles** and/or transparency in the **regulatory environment** can be impediments to sustainable international VET activity. This was reflected in three fiches (DE, NL and AU).

Similarly with other countries, those much experienced countries face financial constraints. In their case, the key consideration is that allocating sufficient funding for effectively promoting the VET model abroad is crucial – i.e. to ensure that emerging countries model the national system in question rather than this of its competitors.

⁴³ Visa-related constraints are also reported in the Maltese fiche.

5 Mapping of countries' frameworks for international cooperation in VET

This section gives an overview of countries' frameworks for international cooperation in VET based on a mapping described in section 2. It also gives insights into who are the main partner countries and why.

In this analysis, distinction has been made between countries that have:

- adopted a strategy focusing on internationalisation of VET or plan to do so;
- a diversity of actions;
- no specific or marginal policies on the topic.

The term '**strategy**' is understood as an overarching policy document which clearly focuses on 'international cooperation in VET' and sets out information such as: definition(s), rationale for action and challenges, priority actions and roadmap, examples of initiatives, actors, etc.

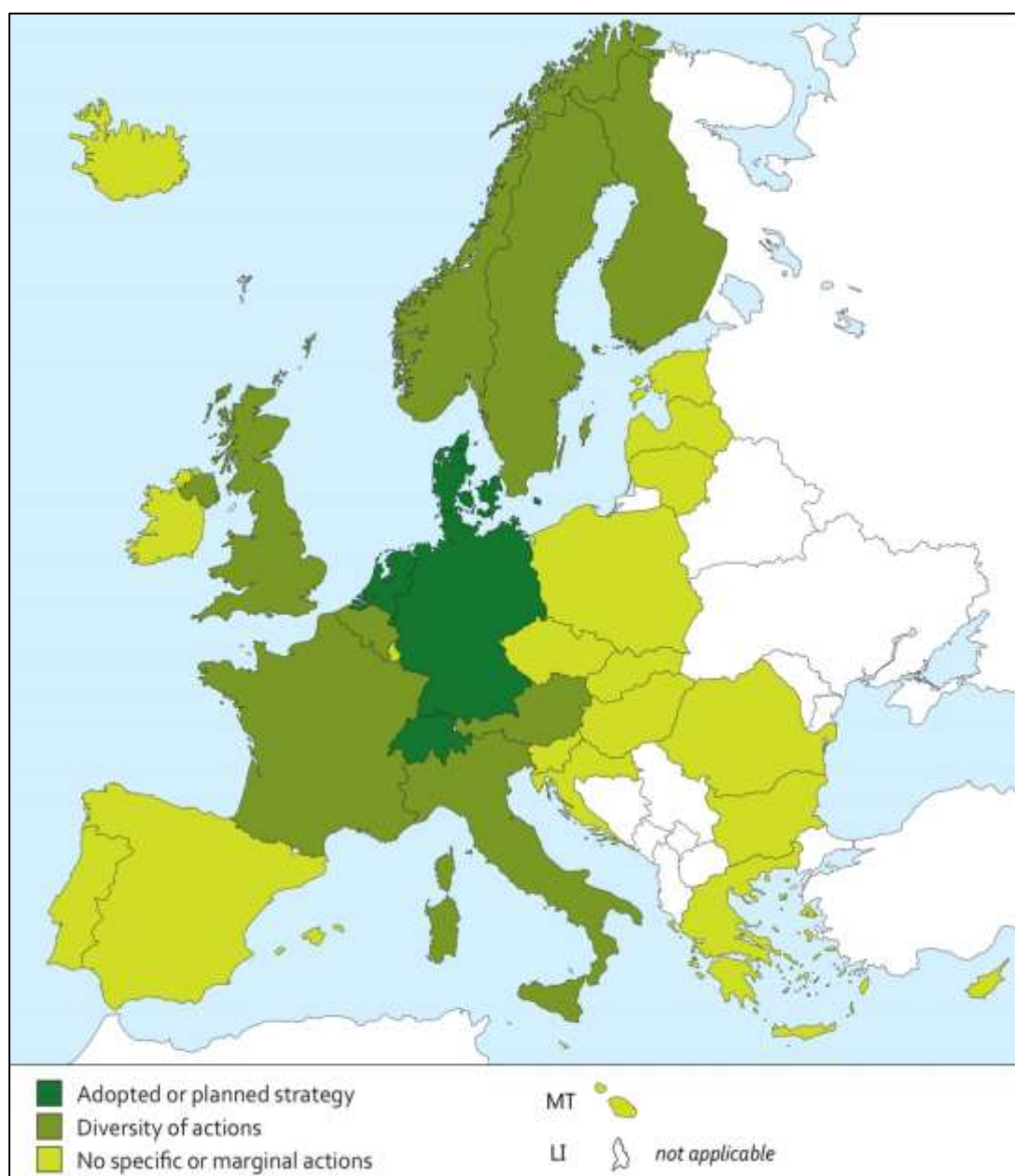
A 'diversity of **actions**' is understood as: a non-coordinated set of actions which may take the form of policy documents, legislation, existing structures in place or actions of specific relevance which contribute to different extents to supporting international cooperation in the sector. These usually acknowledge the value of and the need to support international cooperation in VET. They may either consist of general internationalisation-related recommendations applying to various educational levels/sectors including VET or much targeted ones focusing on given sub-dimensions of VET or existing practices.

The baseline here is that, as opposed to a strategy, a framework of actions does not offer a comprehensive strategic vision of actions that will have to be carried out within a given timeframe and coordinated by given actors. A framework of actions is rather a set of statements or measures that support directly or indirectly international cooperation in VET. These are not necessarily linked to each other.

The 32 countries analysed are clustered as follows (see also Figure 2):

- **5 Countries with an adopted or planned strategy.** These include three EU countries which have or are planning an adoption of a strategy that clearly focuses on internationalisation in the VET section (Germany, Denmark and the Netherlands). Such strategies also exist outside the EU, for example in Switzerland and Australia
- **8 Countries with a 'diversity of actions'.** These include seven EU countries which have developed international cooperation activities that cover VET (Austria, Belgium, Finland, France, Italy, Sweden and the United Kingdom). This situation has also been found in Norway. In these countries internationalisation measures targeting VET exist but they are either part of a broader internationalisation strategy that also covers other aspects of education or they are not specifically coordinated. Some of the countries cooperate in VET with accession, candidate or neighbourhood countries, which are however mainly outside the scope of the assignment (with the exception of Turkey).
- **Countries with no specific or marginal policies:** BG, CY, CZ, EE, EL, ES, HR, HU, IE, IS, LT, LU, LV, PL, PT, RO, SI and SK. Most have no cooperation activities conducted by public operators in VET outside those within the accession or Europeanisation process.

Figure 2. Types of policy support in the EU/EFTA countries covered



Source: ICF

(* Australia has a strategy on international cooperation in VET)

Another way of looking at the level of development of EU countries' international cooperation in VET, is to map the scale of countries' activities. The countries reviewed have been categorised according to whether the mapping identified many (and large scale) or only a few (small scale) initiatives (see Figure 3):

- Countries that have been categorised as having extensive cooperation are those where a wide range of initiatives⁴⁴ was found. In these countries, these initiatives usually fall under each of the main types of cooperation activities categorised by

⁴⁴ The information supplied builds on qualitative data as presented in the country fiches produced for the study.

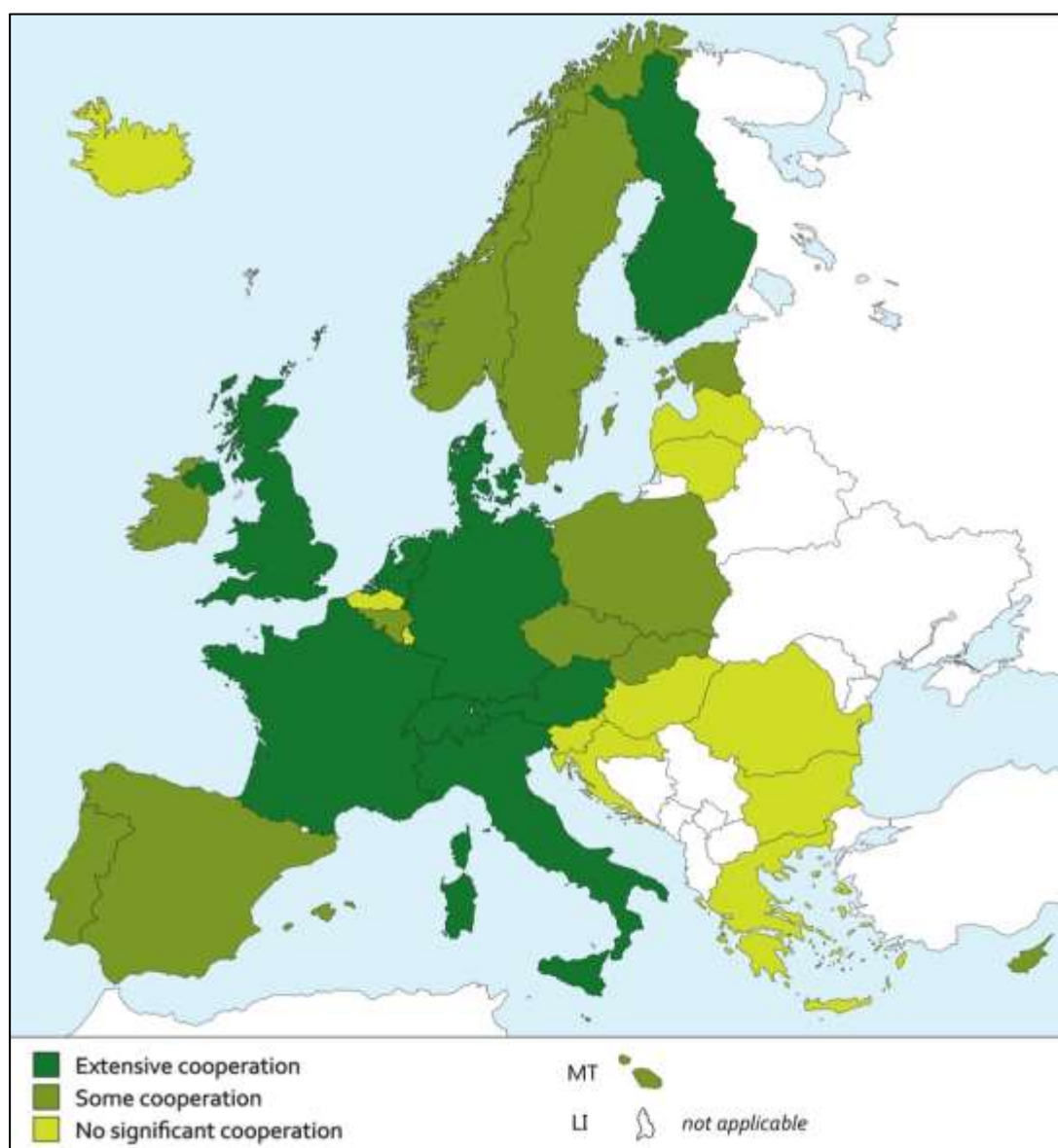
the study (see section 6). They may be publicly-, privately-led or both. They furthermore involve the main types of stakeholders.

- Countries that have been categorised as having some cooperation are those where a few initiatives were identified. These fall under one or several of the main types of cooperation activities considered in the study, do not necessarily involve all main types of stakeholders and usually include initiatives of an ad-hoc nature.
- Countries that have been categorised as having no significant cooperation are those where either no initiative or only small ad-hoc initiatives were found. Some of these also include examples of cooperation with developing countries suggesting that the extent to which these do fall under VET would merit to be further explored.

As apparent from these two figures there is a partial overlap:

- The countries that have a strategy also have extensive cooperation arrangements in place;
- Many of the countries that have no specific framework or a marginal set of actions are also classified as not having any significant cooperation activities;
- However, some of the countries that don't have a strategy do have extensive cooperation measures in place (but these are not coordinated) – for example France, Austria, Italy or the UK;
- Some countries that have no specific or only marginal actions still have a few relatively important initiatives (but often also quite narrowly focused on specific countries) that have been developed on more ad-hoc basis and hence have been classified as having some cooperation – this is for example the case in Spain, Portugal or Ireland.

Figure 3. Scale of EU countries' international cooperation in VET



Source: ICF

5.1 Countries with a strategy on international cooperation in VET

The analysis shows that **5 countries** (CH, DE, DK, NL and Australia) have either a national strategy to develop international cooperation in VET or have taken steps towards this. Amongst these countries, Germany, the Netherlands and Australia have adopted formal strategies in the sector.

In **Germany**, VET was a key area for international cooperation strategy since the early 2000's. However this mainly concerned development aid. An important landmark in international cooperation in VET was the adoption of a new vocational and training Act in 2005 which recognised training periods abroad and also made them a part of the dual system. This launched the work on the **strategy for international VET cooperation**⁴⁵ which was adopted in 2013 by the Federal Government. Its main purpose is to promote

⁴⁵ http://www.bmbf.de/pubRD/Strategiepapier_der_Bundesregierung_zur_internationale

Germany's dual training model worldwide by supporting foreign partners in the implementation and expansion of company-integrated VET, in conjunction with German partners⁴⁶. Associating national stakeholders in the process is seen as an important means to adapt German educational structures to the requirements and conditions in partner countries to establishing them in a sustainable manner⁴⁷.

A key component of the strategy is the Programme iMOVE (International Marketing of Vocational Education) operated by the Centre Office for International Vocational Education and Training Cooperation, which acts as the one-stop shop for the Federal Government international vocational training cooperation.

In the **Netherlands**, the Internationalisation Agenda for Secondary Vocational Education and Training 2009-2011⁴⁸ has been developed by the Dutch Trade Board, the Ministry of Economic Affairs and the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science.

The document is driven by globalisation-related considerations. Though primarily focusing on students/trainers mobility, it builds on four key principles:

- The 'internationalisation of VET': including internationalisation of the curriculum and increasing the capacity of educational institutions to organise international activities;
- Mobility: making optimal use of the Leonardo da Vinci programme and attracting more foreign students. This includes increasing the proportion of students who are mobile from 0.64%⁴⁹ to the European benchmark of 6%.
- Cooperation in Europe and beyond: this principle refers to implementing and making use of European instruments, such as *European Qualifications Framework for Life Long Learning (EQF)* and the *European Credit Transfer System for Vocational Education and Training (ECVET)*
- Improving the competitive position of Dutch VET: this principle refers to promoting Dutch VET in Europe and in the world and to effectively work within international organisations.

At a practical level, the strategy is supported by a number of platforms and initiatives financed by the Ministry of Education and Culture (e.g. VIOS - *Verankering van internationale oriëntatie en samenwerking*/incorporating international orientation and cooperation⁵⁰ - or the Europees platform⁵¹).

In **Australia** there is a long tradition in international cooperation in education, including VET. The provision of international education services is even Australia's number 1 export in the services industry. These services include education and training for international students, capacity building projects in other countries, and partnerships with industry⁵². One of the main features of Australian VET system is that it is offered by various types of providers including public, private and community training providers. It can link to university study options, and provides up to six levels of nationally recognised qualifications in most industries, including high-growth, new economy industries.

⁴⁶ <http://www.bibb.de/en/65148.htm>

⁴⁷ http://www.bibb.de/dokumente/pdf/improving_and_promoting_vet_broschuere_worlsskills_2013_07_02.pdf

⁴⁸ <http://www.ecbo.nl/downloads/publicaties/A00502.pdf>

⁴⁹ This number represents the proportion of VET students who go abroad within registered mobility programmes. The Council of VET colleges (MBO raad) estimates the proportion of mobile VET students to be around 2% if taking account of private initiatives and students who entirely study abroad.

⁵⁰ <http://www.europeesplatform.nl/nieuws/vios-verankering-van-internationale-orientatie-en-samenwerking>

⁵¹ www.europeesplatform.nl

⁵² http://www.tda.edu.au/cb_pages/international_projects.php

The topic has received significant attention from the policy level over past years. In 2007, a **strategic framework for international engagement by the Australian vocational education and training (VET) sector** was adopted for the period 2007 – 2011⁵³. Its main purpose was to support international engagement by the Australian VET sector by articulating some of the opportunities and some of the challenges faced. It was designed to encourage the development and implementation of a shared vision, and greater collaboration and partnerships, amongst the key stakeholders of the sector.

The strategic framework built on the following objectives:

- to sustain a rate of growth for onshore VET enrolments through diversification and quality and to support increased offshore quality delivery by Australian providers⁵⁴;
- to stimulate student and worker mobility through expanding recognition of Australian qualifications internationally;
- to promote recognition of Australia's VET system as a good practice model and assist other countries to develop their VET systems through the adoption of relevant elements of the Australian system, and;
- to ensure that activities undertaken to promote international VET engagement by different key stakeholders⁵⁵ support and complement each other.

More recently, recommendations were made in a report⁵⁶ from the International Education Advisory Council published in 2013 to shape a new governmental five year strategy for international education. These relate to 7 dimensions where action is required. These are outlined in the box below.

Australia – key recommendations towards a new strategy

- **Coordination:** ensure improved coordination of government policy and programmes for international education and better consultative mechanisms for stakeholders, in order to optimise government support for the international education sector.
- **Quality:** position Australia as a provider of the highest quality education, while reducing over-regulation, duplication and overlap
- **A positive student experience:** maintain and build on Australia's reputation as an open and friendly learning environment where international students are valued members of the community and are supported to achieve their goals.
- **Partnerships:** encourage Australian institutions and governments to develop strong and diverse international and multinational partnerships that encourage exchange, capacity building and collaboration
- **Ensuring integrity – Australia's student visa program:** ensure that Australia's student visa settings continue to be competitive and attractive in all education sectors while preserving the integrity of Australia's international student visa program and helping to meet national skills needs

⁵³ <http://www.tda.edu.au/resources/1401081.pdf>

⁵⁴ i.e. independently, in partnership with Australian industry, in partnership with local business, and in partnership with local providers.

⁵⁵ i.e. including state and territory jurisdictions and VET related peak bodies.

⁵⁶ International Education Advisory Council, 'Australia- Educating globally – Advisory from the International Education Advisory Council', February 2013.

- **Data analysis and research in international education:** inform Australia's international education policy through accurate and timely data analysis and research as well as supporting increased collaboration between researchers.
- **Competition, promotion and marketing:** market Australia as a supplier of high quality education and continue to build its core markets while pursuing diversification through engagement with emerging markets and increased offshore delivery.

In two further countries (DK and CH) similar strategies were **due for adoption in 2014**.

In **Denmark**, an internationalisation strategy for VET in the context of lifelong learning was being prepared at the time this report was assembled. According to interviewed officials, the strategy is likely to emphasise that the relative competitiveness of Denmark will depend upon the quality of the skilled workforce and this of the lifelong learning system. The latter will need to ensure sufficient inter-sector mobility driven by technological advancements and changing patterns of global specialisation.

In January 2014, VET providers, social partners, companies, and experts were invited by the Danish Ministry of Education to reflect upon the upcoming strategy and in particular to share their views on practice examples inspired from other countries.⁵⁷ Fact-finding missions have been organised to Switzerland, Germany as well as Finland to learn about the underlying models of successful approaches/initiatives (e.g. the Swissmen initiative – see details in section 6) and to explore opportunities for collaboration on international VET system development.

In **Switzerland**, a strategy for international cooperation in VET was being developed by the State Secretariat for Education, Research and Innovation⁵⁸ (SERI) in late 2014. This will build on the comprehensive 2010 strategy for education, research and innovation whose VET-related aims are:

- To strengthen and promote the positioning of Swiss VET at international level;
- To promote the recognition of Swiss VET diplomas and certificates;
- To promote transparency and recognition in VET (e.g. National Qualifications Framework);
- To ensure the supply of skilled labour: within Switzerland and for Swiss companies operating abroad;
- To foster innovation through mutual exchange with other countries;
- To promote international mobility;
- To improve the coordination of international VET cooperation at national level (e.g. between the Swiss cantons).

A commonality among these five cases is that all recognise VET as an important market internationally. In line with their commercial and diplomatic strategies, each country has sought to create VET links in regions where national investments are important or in regions of strategic or historical importance. VET cooperation also generally takes place in sectors where each country has an industrial added value, as for example in the sectors of engineering, mechanics, and environmental technology in the case of Germany.

⁵⁷<http://www.uvm.dk/Aktuelt/~UVM-DK/Content/News/Int/2014/Jan/140110-Dialogmoede-om-dansk-uddannelsesektor>

⁵⁸ <http://www.sbfi.admin.ch>

5.2 Countries with a diversity of actions

In the absence of a comprehensive strategy, international cooperation in VET may be supported by different sets of actions, either linked among each other or not.

These may take different forms from one country to another, ranging from public recognition of the value of international cooperation in VET; general recommendations on the need to support actions in the area (i.e. in overarching educational strategies or VET legislation) to more targeted initiatives. These may be first steps towards further developments leading to formal strategies at ultimate later stage as the above suggests.

According to the information supplied in the country fiches, a 'framework for actions' in the area is found in **nine countries** (AT, BE, FI, FR, IT, NO, SE, PL and UK). Amongst these countries, France and the UK are the ones where a significant number of actions in the area are found.

In **France**, a wide range of actors including different ministries (i.e. those responsible for education and training/higher education and research, foreign affairs and employment) and bodies (e.g. Agence française pour le développement de l'enseignement technique (AFDET), UBIFRANCE⁵⁹, GIP international, etc.) have developed actions in the area. However a formalised strategic framework does not currently exist. There have been several recent initiatives to work towards one: the publication of inter-ministerial guidelines (*lettre de cadrage inter-ministérielle*), the ordering by the Ministry of higher education, the Ministry of foreign affairs and the Ministry of Labour of a currently ongoing study on the performance of France's cooperation network in VET and a joint seminar on international cooperation in VET between public and private VET providers.

The document maps existing initiatives in the field of cooperation in higher VET (e.g. support to French companies operating abroad in their efforts to train the local labour force; institutional capacity building; etc.) and sets priorities in the following areas:

- Cooperation with emerging countries, with Eastern Europe, Mediterranean countries and Africa,
- The development of intermediary-level skills,
- The provision of trainings at the local level,
- The development of national certification frameworks.

Interviewees confirmed that despite clear interest (i.e. among the different Ministries and key actors involved) and concrete actions in the area, no formal strategy has been issued yet. No plans towards the development of such a document have been reported either. Anecdotally, an interviewee denoted that a common approach embedded in a document ('lettre de cadrage') applied to the main Ministries involved in the past to ensure consistency of actions. This has not been renewed though.

In the **UK**, the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS) and the Department for Education (DfE) have put in place an *International Education Strategy: Global Growth and Prosperity* in 2013. Though embedding VET (to limited extent), this strategic document does not primarily focus on international cooperation in the sector (i.e. as opposed to the countries presented in the previous category) but covers the whole education sector.

Previously, in 2012, the Association of Colleges (AoC) developed a proposal on *UK Vocational Education and Training (VET) - Towards a Comprehensive Strategy for International Development* on behalf of the BIS. This document was guided by the work of a Steering Group representing the UK VET sector and calls for a national strategy based on "greater clarity and consistency of aims across government and sustained

⁵⁹ French agency for international business development.

government support for the UK VET sector; a simple, unified 'ecosystem' approach to describing and marketing our UK VET system to international customers and use of a single brand".

The document underlined some aspects that could contribute to a strong UK international strategy on VET:

- UK awarding bodies and qualifications are widely recognised;
- Many colleges and companies are already successfully offering education and training to international students in the UK or in their home countries;
- The UK's government quality assurance agencies covering both awards and the delivery of learning programmes are known for their rigour and transparency.

However, interviewees confirmed that the latter lost its importance in 2013 further to the adoption of the above-mentioned strategy. Though covering VET, to some extent, main emphasis is put on the internationalisation of higher education across this document.

In five fiches (BEfr, BEnl, FI, NO, SE), reference is made to the value of 'international cooperation', acknowledged through on-going lifelong learning strategies (i.e. encompassing all levels and sectors of education and training, including VET). Meanwhile, no policy documents strictly focusing on VET and on its internationalisation exist to date.

In **Belgium**, Wallonia-Brussels International⁶⁰ (WBI)⁶¹ has developed a strategy for the internationalisation of the Wallonia-Brussels Region⁶². Its main purpose is to promote the latter as an economically attractive region at the international level. Education (including VET) is one of its transversal objectives. However, VET related actions essentially focus on development cooperation.

In the Flemish Community, two strategic documents aimed to foster international cooperation in education have been adopted over past years⁶³. Both documents were not drafted specifically for VET, but refer to the internationalisation of education in general. A further review of the most recent one (White paper on internationalisation of education) shows that besides the intensification of foreign language courses no specific actions are foreseen to support international cooperation in VET though.

In **Finland**, the Development Plan 2011 – 2016, which is the central strategy document from the Ministry of Education and Culture, also includes general references to international cooperation in education and training. The document supports enhanced activities in VET cooperation beyond the EU, stating that *"Cooperation with non-EU countries will be stepped up in matters relating to vocational education and training between educational administrations and the network of training providers"*.

In Norway and Sweden, references to international cooperation in VET are very general, embedded in recent education and training-related policy documents. Meanwhile, some evidence of increasing attention being paid to the topic was found.

This is in particular the case in **Norway** where the topic has been brought to the political agenda on several occasions. In 2008 already, an expert committee appointed by the

⁶⁰ Wallonia-Brussels International (WBI) is the Public Authority for International Relations of Wallonia-Brussels. It is the instrument of the international policy of Wallonia, the Federation Wallonia-Brussels and the French Community Commission of the Brussels-Capital Region.

⁶¹ <http://www.wbi.be/>

⁶² Note de politique internationale, available at : http://www.wbi.be/sites/default/files/attachments/page/note_de_politique_internationale2.pdf

⁶³ Consisting of the 2009-2014 Government's White Paper on Education and the 2007 Recommendation of the Flemish Education Council on the internationalisation of Flemish education <http://www.vlor.be/sites/www.vlor.be/files/advies/ar-adv008-0708.pdf>

Norwegian government prepared the Green Paper *Fagopplæring for fremtida* (Vocational education for the future), which emphasised the necessity of internationalisation in VET as a consequence of globalisation. One of the recommendations that the committee put forward was to establish specific VET mobility programmes to open up for greater mobility to countries outside the EU. No evidence that such programmes have been established was found though. In 2009, the White Paper *Internasjonalisering av utdanningen* (Internationalisation of education) also highlighted the necessity for the development of more internationally oriented lines of study and courses in VET as well as an increase in cooperation agreements with foreign educational institutions.

In **Sweden**, 'internationalisation' is a focal point in the general curriculum requirements set forward by the Swedish National Agency for Education for upper secondary VET in *Gymnasiaskolan*. The latter specify that it is the responsibility of the head teacher to encourage international contacts, cooperation and exchange during the education. Likewise, the Swedish National Agency for Higher Vocational Education encourages the individual VET providers to incorporate an international strategy in their overall strategy.⁶⁴

At the *Yrkeshögskola* (post-secondary non-tertiary educational level (ISCED 4)), a mandatory part of the study takes place in companies as on-the-job training. This placement can also be at a company abroad. In practice, the vast majority of placements take place across the EU. If they wish to if they wish to organise placements beyond the EU, the schools themselves have to earmark funds for which the students can apply.

In line with funding, funding schemes to support international cooperation in VET are found in Finland and Norway. In Finland, the Finnish Ministry of Education and Culture earmarks funds to support internationalisation of upper secondary VET. The Finnish National Board of Education (FNBE) administrates the funding and its allocation. The funding is granted to national networks of upper secondary VET providers who apply for funding for international VET cooperation activities⁶⁵.

In remaining countries (AT, IT and PL), reference is made the need to support international cooperation in the sector in VET legislation or policy documents.

In **Austria**, the Mission Statement of the General Directorate for Vocational Education and Training defines internationalisation targets⁶⁶. Related statements do not distinguish between European and global level though. The main objective is to promote European and worldwide cooperation in view of specialist and pedagogical exchanges inside and outside national and European programmes. In the coming years, the ministry plans to consolidate international affairs and set thematic as well as geographic emphases. The activities regarding VET will include strengthening bilateral exchange between experts as well as multilateral cooperation. Furthermore, it is planned to involve Austrian schools abroad more strongly in the global activities in the field of 'German as a foreign language' (GaFL).

In **Italy**, different Ministries have signed partnership agreements with public institutions, VET providers and network of enterprises to promote vocational training cooperation with countries considered strategic for their historical/geographical position or for the consolidation of Italian firms in foreign markets.

⁶⁴ This information was reported by an interviewee.

⁶⁵ To be eligible, the networks have to comprise a minimum of three Finnish VET providers who engage in cooperation with local partners and to supply evidence that they have an international strategy incorporated in their overall strategy.

⁶⁶

http://www.berufsbildendeschulen.at/fileadmin/content/qibb/Dokumente/Leitbilder/Mission_Statement_Sektion_II_EN.pdf

The Ministry of Education, University and Research (MIUR) supports international cooperation in VET at policy level by providing technical assistance and capacity building to competent public bodies to improve partner countries' VET systems, to exchange information on curricula and to recognise qualifications. The driver behind these actions is the will to strengthen cooperation with countries engaged in commercial agreements or where Italian productive investments (in the industry sector, through the programme "Machines Italia" for instance) are crucial.

5.3 Countries with marginal level of activity in internationalisation of VET

In over half of the countries⁶⁷, either no specific action or sporadic ones are reported in the area of international cooperation in VET.

In **Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Romania and Slovakia**, the country reports highlight that there is neither a long tradition of transnational cooperation (starting with other EU countries) in VET nor a strong economic sector to export. Since their accession to the EU, these countries have usually gained cooperation experience with other EU countries in the sector⁶⁸. Meanwhile, no reference is made in current legislation or other strategic documents to supporting VET cooperation with third countries.

In the case of Bulgaria, the adoption of the Law for Amendment and Supplement of the VET Act in 2014 is likely to provide more opportunities for bilateral cooperation with EU countries and possibly with non-EU countries⁶⁹. A similar situation is observed in **Croatia, Slovenia and Luxembourg**. In the first ones, the only efforts identified in the field lean more towards development assistance and are focused towards other ex-Yugoslav countries in the South Eastern Europe (i.e. ERI SEE – Education Reform Initiative of South Eastern Europe network which supported establishment of the network of VET Centres in SEE).

In Luxembourg, ongoing legislation⁷⁰ encourages international partnerships for the exchange of pedagogical practices. However, most of them take place, in practice, within the Greater Region (Luxembourg, Saarland, Lorraine, Rhineland-Palatinate, Wallonia, French- and German-speaking Communities of Belgium), in the framework of European projects or bilateral agreements.⁷¹ A few other cooperation examples exist but these all fall under the remit of development aid.

In **Cyprus and Greece**, no specific policy framework regarding international cooperation in VET with third countries exists either. Research reveals however that Cyprus has signed several bilateral educational agreements with third countries, which may include cooperation under VET. In Greece, this absence is said to be attributable to the lack of a targeted strategic development policy regarding VET combined with financial constraints according to an interviewee.

In **Iceland**, the policy debate on VET is mainly centred on increasing young people's participation in VET in order to combat long-term unemployment. Focus has

⁶⁷ i.e. 17 countries: BG, CY, CZ, EE, EL, ES, HR, HU, IS, LT, LU, LV, MT, PT, RO, SI, SK.

⁶⁸ This is e.g. denoted in the following documents in Bulgaria: the *National strategy for lifelong learning for the period 2008-2013*; the *Draft action plan for the implementation of the national strategy for lifelong learning 2014-2020*.

⁶⁹ i.e. as mentioned by an interviewee. Law available at: <http://www.parliament.bg/bg/bills/ID/14842>.

⁷⁰ *Règlement grand-ducal du 24 août 2007 relatif aux modalités d'organisation, de fonctionnement et d'évaluation des cours de formation professionnelle continue et de reconversion professionnelle organisés au Centre national de formation professionnelle continue. Code de l'Éducation nationale*. Available in French at: http://www.legilux.public.lu/leg/textescoordonnes/compilation/code_education_nationale/CHAPITRE_7.pdf

⁷¹ Source: Eurypedia. [Article 13.4 for Luxembourg](#). More information available on the website of the ministry of education: *Accords bilatéraux interrégionaux et intergouvernementaux*.

predominantly been on national measures to enhance VET attractiveness and quality, and there is neither a strategy nor a framework for internationalisation in VET. As external cooperation in VET is not perceived as a means to increase VET attractiveness and quality, it has not been a funding priority for the government either.⁷² As noted earlier, the geographical isolation of the country is seen as an important obstacle to VET internationalisation. Where existing, transnational cooperation in the sector is limited and restricted to EU/EEA countries and the Nordic countries in particular.

In **Estonia, Latvia Lithuania** and **Spain**, recent legislation on VET makes reference to the need to foster 'international cooperation' in education and training (including VET). The extent to which this refers to cooperation with countries outside the EU is unclear though.

In **Estonia**, no reference is made to VET 'internationalisation' in the national lifelong learning strategy for 2020. Meanwhile, the preamble of the Vocational Educational Institutions Act states twelve tasks that VET institutions must perform to offer quality education. One of these regards the obligation to establish 'decent national and international cooperation between schools, students and faculties, so as to establish an essential principle for institutions to collaborate and learn from abroad'.

In **Lithuania**, though no practice examples seem to exist yet, developments are emerging at policy level the new Action Plan of the Ministry of Education and Science on Vocational Education development for the period 2014-2016 foresees necessity and actions for increasing internationalisation of vocational education and studies until year 2016.

In **Latvia**, the 2014-2020 Education Development Strategy⁷³ acknowledges the necessity to increase the support to the 'internationalisation' of VET. Among the different actions foreseen, the document plans to increase international competitiveness of the sector mainly through the Erasmus+ programme what suggests that the envisaged geographical scope of action is likely to target EU and neighbour countries primarily. Against this background, an interesting development that is worth being noted is the fact the Fifth Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM) of ministers of education which will be held during the Latvian presidency of the Council (first half of 2015) is seen as an opportunity to strengthen cooperation in education and training between ASEM countries.⁷⁴

In **Spain**, some general references to the topic are found in the respective legislations on initial and continuing VET. In the first one, the Ministry of Education jointly with the regional ministries commit to promoting measures to increase the participation of students, workers, teachers and trainers in national and international mobility programmes.⁷⁵ This applying to continuing VET states that agreements will be encouraged with public and private companies to promote professional placements, including international placements, for the unemployed.⁷⁶

In addition, some public and private institutions have launched mobility programmes that involve non-EU countries that target people that have recently finished either university or higher VET (ISCED 5B) studies.

⁷² Cedefop, 2011, *VET in Europe – Iceland Country Report*.

⁷³ <http://www.mk.gov.lv/lv/mk/tap/?pid=40305684>

⁷⁴ According to the representative from the Ministry of Education interviewed by ICF. The ASEM meeting is also mentioned in a press release from the Latvian government: <http://www.mfa.gov.lv/en/news/press-releases/2013/October/23-4/>

⁷⁵ Royal decree 1147/2011, of July 29, establishing the general organisation of professional education in the education system (State Official Gazette 30-7-2011).

⁷⁶ Royal decree 395/2007, of March 23, that regulates the subsystem of professional training for employment (State Official Gazette 11-4-2007).

Lastly, no much information is found in VET legislation in **Malta, Poland** and **Portugal**, but a few (though limited) targeted practice examples are reported.

In Poland, several bilateral cooperation agreements in the field of culture, science and education have been concluded by the government⁷⁷. The Minister of Education has also signed cooperation programmes in the field of education with partners in the Russian Federation and held a meeting with a delegation from Brazil (employers) in the past two years. The extent to which these are aimed to foster international cooperation in VET specifically is unclear though. Meanwhile, examples of plans for development of the sector the regional and local levels were reported by interviewees. This is for instance the case of the 2010-2015 strategy for VET development issued in the Malbork Poviast (District).

In Portugal, most of them concentrate on the promotion of Portuguese language and culture abroad. In Malta, in the absence of a strategic document⁷⁸, the two main VET educational institutions (the Malta College of Arts, Science and Technology (MCAST) and the Institute for Tourism Studies (ITS)) develop their own international strategies. Those however mainly cover the EU.

5.4 Third countries targeted by cooperation in VET

The list of countries with which EU/EFTA countries cooperate in the area of VET is long and as explained earlier it is influenced by historical, diplomatic or commercial and industrial links. This study found cooperation arrangements with industrialised as well as emerging countries, but also developing countries:

- Among the emerging countries, China is the one that receives the most attention, closely followed by India and Turkey. Other countries often chosen for cooperation in VET are Mexico, Russia, Brazil, Vietnam, Colombia, Malaysia, Nigeria, Saudi Arabia and South Africa.
- Among the developed countries, the USA leads the list. Cooperation is also frequent with Canada and Japan, but less widespread with Australia and New Zealand.
- Several developing countries were also mentioned by EU/EFTA countries as relevant partners in international cooperation. The most significant case is Libya, mentioned by three EU/EFTA countries.

⁷⁷ Register of the above mentioned agreements can be found at:
<http://www.traktaty.msz.gov.pl/SearchTreaties.aspx?t=DW>

⁷⁸ A strategy in favour of the internationalisation of education is currently been developed in its very early stages. VET is included although no particular focus has been placed on it at this stage.

Figure 4. Most commonly reported targeted countries



Source: ICF

Annex 4 presents the list of EU/EFTA countries and their key partners for international cooperation in VET as identified through this research.

In line with their commercial and diplomatic strategies, each country has sought to create VET links in regions where national investments are important or in regions of strategic or historical importance (e.g. France-Maghreb, UK-India, Poland-Russia, etc.). These links may be guided by top-down strategies, promoted by governments (e.g. UK-India, UK-China), or bottom-up strategies, promoted by significant companies in the country. The latter is clearly the case in Germany where VET provision abroad (dual system) is clearly company-driven. Another example is Norway, where the geographical scope of VET cooperation has to a great extent been shaped by the commercial interests of Norwegian companies, especially within the oil and gas sector.

Another element that seems to be driving international cooperation in VET is the experience of development aid. As explained earlier the border between cooperation and development aid is sometimes rather blurred. Some of the initiatives identified in the mapping can be assimilated to *development* cooperation. EU/EFTA countries appear to be more likely to cooperate with those countries with which they engaged in development aid. For instance, KulturKontakt (Austria) cooperates with Southeast European, Eastern European and Mediterranean countries, amongst which most of it is via the European Training Foundation (ETF). The Institute of the Republic of Slovenia for Vocational Education and Training also establishes development cooperation with Southeast European countries. The box below illustrates the above-mentioned findings with evidence from some of the case studies.

Examples from the case studies

- At top level, the British Council International Skills Partnerships (ISPs) were initiated following recognition of the increased focus on skills and VET in the education and training agenda at global level. The importance of responding to the needs of industry and of increasing the quality of skills provision, as expressed widely by economic and social partners, was the starting point for the launch of the initiative "Skills for employability". At 'bottom' level, Proskills UK, one of the participating VET providers, saw the ISPs as an opportunity to lay the basis for future mutually- beneficial commercial relationships between UK material, production and supply industries and partners in third countries.
- MODUL tourism school's international cooperation is embedded in the Austrian

Chamber of Commerce's "go-international" framework programme. This framework programme aims to support the development of Austrian companies abroad by financial support, contacts and information. It is supported by the Austrian trade commissioners⁷⁹ in foreign countries.

- The German GTdee programme was found to be embedded in the German Foreign Chambers (AHK)'s VETNET project which aims to promote the German dual education system in the following 11 countries: Brazil, China, Greece, India, Italy, Latvia, Portugal, Russia, Slovakia, Spain and Thailand. The approach followed is to implement concrete measures in the countries that might lead to more systemic changes in terms of including dual elements in VET. This is also supported by other similar projects in the ASEAN region, e.g. the GIZ is also responsible for the development of a concept for in-company trainers in the whole ASEAN region (this is a separate project which nevertheless works in close cooperation with the GTdee).
- The Swiss AFS year abroad programme for apprentices was spurred on recommendation of the Swiss company Sulzer which promoted the benefits in terms of improved language and intercultural skills and enlarged professional network of taking part in an international exchange programme. Enhancing the appeal of VET against the backdrop of declining demographics and concerns over a future shortage in skilled labourforce.
- The main objective of the French "Campus Pro International centres of excellence in technical training" programme on the other hand was the provision of training to the local workforce and the export of French VET standards and support to French companies abroad. In certain countries, cooperation went further as per the beneficiary's appetite and other factors. For example in Mexico, the set-up of training centres led to the development of an end-of-school career technical qualification for the car industry, on the basis of the French "*bac professionnel*". In other countries, changes in approaches to VET, e.g. stronger links between educational organisations and employers, were also identified.

The objective of development cooperation is not exclusively poverty reduction in the partner country, but also covers commercial and strategic interests for VET providers and private companies. For example in Germany, the *Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit* (GIZ), Germany's development agency has had a role in VET cooperation that has been broader than traditional, development cooperation as the box below shows.

Examples of VET cooperation informed by a development experience

- The GIZ has partnered with the Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF), the Federal Institute for Vocational Education and Training (BIBB), and the private sector, on a number of VET projects with emerging and transition countries. This partnering has been considered as a strength of the governmental approach to international cooperation in VET, combining (1) a development-sensitive, long-term approach concerned with the necessity to adapt the German VET model to local conditions, with (2) the technical and commercial- and research driven expertise available respectively at the BIBB and within the German Chambers of Industry and Commerce in Germany (DIHK) or worldwide (AHK).

⁷⁹ Located at the Austrian embassies.

- For example in 2012, the GIZ and the DIHK signed a declaration of intent to promote links in countries where both organisations are present, this will support access from business to GIZ projects and vice versa. This allows each agency to contribute to international VET initiatives according to their respective strengths: the AHK has the technical knowledge and access to businesses for the implementation of the dual VET models abroad, for which it can be contracted, whereas up-scaling a pilot project and providing advice at policy level can be conducted by the GIZ. This is based on the fundamental principle which underlies the German dual VET model that the mobilization of the private sector is key to its success. For example, under the German-Thai Dual Excellence Education programme (more details below), the AHK was involved in the technical aspects of the programme (e.g. training of in-company trainers, quality assurance etc.), and the GIZ worked to ensure that what was being piloted in a profession or region could be up-scaled and serve as an example for how TVET in Thailand.

There is other evidence that EU/EFTA countries are more likely to cooperate with those countries with which they engaged in development aid in the past or in parallel, as the same countries can be targeted by both types of cooperation (development and commercial/strategic). For instance, KulturKontakt (Austria) cooperates with Southeast European, Eastern European and Mediterranean countries, amongst which most of it is via the European Training Foundation (ETF). The Institute of the Republic of Slovenia for Vocational Education and Training also establishes development cooperation with Southeast European countries.

Examples of VET cooperation linked to development support

- AT: The Austrian Ministry of Education (BMUKK) supports VET projects in cooperation with the European Training Foundation (ETF) and the association KulturKontakt Austria, particularly in Southeast Europe. In many countries, Austrian cooperation initiatives are managed on site by officers for educational cooperation appointed by the BMUKK. Austrian expertise supports the reforms in the target countries by means of experience exchanges, cooperation and well-aimed continuing training measures with local decision-makers and experts.
- BE (BEfr): the Public Authority for the International Relations in Wallonia-Brussels (Wallonia-Brussels International – WBI) signed several bilateral agreements for development cooperation. Examples are to be found within the sectors of physiotherapy (Benin), nursing (Palestine), automotive industry (Vietnam), etc.
- FR: Some of the *Conservatoire National des Arts et Métiers* (CNAM – a leading French VET provider), cooperation activities have also been funded by the 'Agence Française de Développement' (AFD), e.g. the development of a qualification certificate for lift maintenance technicians in Lebanon.
- PT: The Employment and VET Institute (*Instituto do Emprego e Formação Profissional*) develops different activities for capacity building in VET in developing countries from the Community of Portuguese Language Countries. These activities do not bring evident benefits for Portugal, and thus could be classified as cooperation for development.

It should be also mentioned that some initiatives do not target specific countries, but rather have an international scope. It is the case of some mobility schemes as, for instance, the Danish "PIU programme" that provides funding to students that participate in study periods or apprenticeships abroad, or the "Galeuropa programme", promoted by the region of Galicia in Spain, that provides grants for the development of two-months training placements in companies all over the world. Another example is Bios (*Bevordering internationale oriëntatie en samenwerking*) programme for fostering

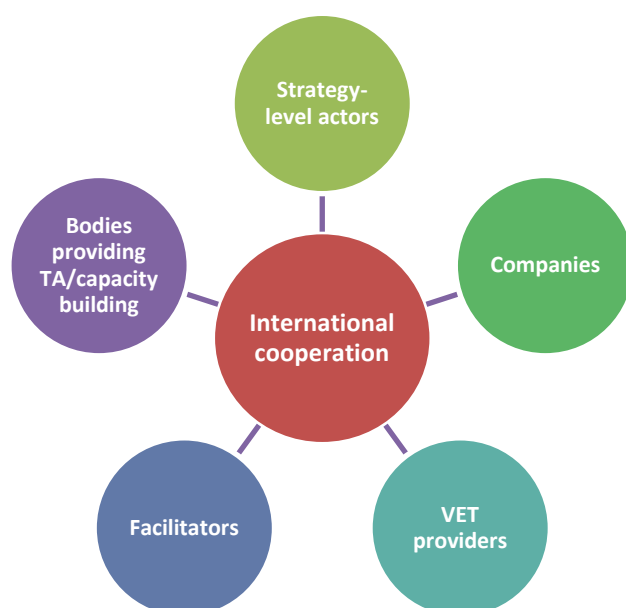
international orientation and cooperation), the most important Dutch grant programme supporting teachers' and students' mobility around the world, as well as innovative language courses. In 2014, Vios (*Verankering van internationale oriëntatie en samenwerking*/incorporating international orientation and cooperation) will succeed Bios as the national subsidy programme. As the name already suggests, Vios will put more emphasis on incorporating internationalisation and cooperation in school strategies.

Many initiatives include both EU and non-EU countries. In fact, cooperation in VET within and beyond Europe is often not clearly distinguished by EU Member States. This is for instant apparent in the Mission Statement of the General Directorate for Vocational Education and Training developed within the Austrian VET Quality Initiative. Key stakeholders or bodies in international cooperation in VET

National-level bodies involved in international cooperation in VET can be distinguished as follows:

- Strategy-level bodies which set the agenda of international cooperation in VET at national level;
- Bodies which provide technical assistance and capacity-building support to third countries;
- VET providers;
- Companies involved in VET provision;
- Facilitators of international cooperation in VET.

Figure 5. Types of bodies involved in international cooperation on VET



Source: ICF

5.4.1 Strategy-level organisations

Organisations involved at strategic level are:

- ministries (namely those in charge of education, training, foreign affairs);
- ministerial agencies in charge of either education issues (such as the BIBB in Germany) and/ or those in charge of trade promotion and international cooperation more generally;
- organisations representing education and training providers at national level (e.g. the Association of Employment and Learning Providers (AELP) in the UK).

In general the roles of these organisations are:

- governance, coordination and strategic orientation (if existent);

- providing and managing funding programmes;
- engagement in policy dialogue.

A key issue in countries where several strategic organisations are involved is to ensure coordination to avoid repetition of efforts but also to ensure clarity and strengthen information and awareness raising about actions led. Ultimately such coordination should also improve the results achieved.

An example of how such coordination between strategic bodies can be ensured can be found in Germany with the establishment of a formal Round Table for international VET cooperation, following the adoption of the 2013 Strategy⁸⁰. Its mandate is to act as a clearing point at high policy level to coordinate answers to requests from abroad and make strategy-level choices. One round table is at strategy-level, it brings together state secretaries. Another brings together leading persons within each federal ministry, government organisation with responsibility in the area, or the social partners and trade and industry representatives that provide the main foundations for the German VET system. The last one is at the operational level. Participation is steadily increasing: additional federal ministries and social partners have expressed interest in participating in the process of the internationalisation of VET now that the signal is clear. The German Office for International Cooperation in Vocational Education and Training was set up to support the round table by providing back office / administrative support. It officially started its work in September 2013. It is responsible for: coordination of implementation of international VET policy across all actors, development of international VET projects and programmes and their evaluation and knowledge management.

5.4.2 Actors which provide technical assistance and capacity-building support to third countries

Organisations providing technical assistance and capacity-building support to third countries are both public and private bodies. These may comprise:

- ministries (in charge of education and/or training in particular);
- ministerial agencies in charge of either education issues (such as the BIBB in Germany);
- public bodies in charge of VET (such as the Swiss Federal Institute for Vocational Education and Training);
- sector organisation for educational institutions;
- chambers of commerce;
- foundations bringing together networks of VET providers, etc.

In general the roles of these bodies include:

- exchange of information (e.g. on curricula and programme development or the recognition and comparability of foreign qualifications);
- providing advice on the development and modernisation of VET including qualifications development research;
- providing institutional support at ministerial level;
- providing support in the development of training programmes and curricula (e.g. in-company training);
- supporting or monitoring training provision.

Typically, public bodies provide support at institutional level, for example, to ministries of third countries, which may include consulting, exchange of experience. In comparison, private actors focus more on the operational level i.e. implementation of concrete measures in a given local context.

⁸⁰ http://www.germany.info/Vertretung/usa/en/__pr/P__Wash/2013/09/13-Dual-Training.html

A key issue encountered in the field of technical assistance and capacity-building is the capability of the organisation to adapt the support to the characteristics of the local context (skills supply and demand), to develop training curricula and qualifications that are fit-for-purpose. The effectiveness of the support may also depend on whether it is provided by a public or a private body.

An example of action that supports capacity-building is this of the French “Campus Pro International centres of excellence in technical training” programme which deploys technical teachers from the Ministry of Education.

In the same vein, but privately-funded, interesting examples include for instance the Dutch Foundation for the Cooperation of Vocational Education and the Labour Market (SBB), an association of vocational education institutions and social partners, which informs stakeholders on the recognition and comparability of foreign VET qualifications and hosts foreign delegations for presentations about the Dutch VET system. In Norway, the Rogaland Training & Education Centre (RKK, a foundation which works through a network of 30 vocational schools), with the support of the main employees’ and employers’ organisations, LO and NHO provides technical assistance and capacity-building to partners in oil-producing countries.

5.4.3 VET Providers

VET providers can be public or private bodies. They can be:

- a public training provider, institution or a network of those (such as the French Conservatoire National des Arts et Métiers (CNAM)⁸¹);
- a private training provider (such as the Austrian MODUL Tourism);
- a manufacturer which also provides training courses in the industry it is active (such as the Austrian EMCO Group).

A main difference between public and private providers is that private ones are primarily driven by growth of client-base concerns and thus more inclined to engage in the conquering of international markets (e.g. for acquiring VET students or for selling training provision). In comparison, public providers are not preliminary driven by economic growth as the charitable status of many schools, universities and colleges (in the UK for instance) suggests.

In general their roles include:

- delivering VET provision targeting various beneficiaries (individuals, companies, organisations and local government agencies, etc.);
- developing VET courses;
- collaborating with enterprises for educating local manpower for their projects, creating VET training centres abroad, etc.;
- delivering seminars including management training and foreign language courses, etc.

A key issue is their heterogeneity and their capacity to evolve in an increasingly competitive environment. VET providers include stakeholders of a different nature (e.g. individual VET institutions, networks of VET institutions, multi-national companies, etc.). The smallest ones, those with limited resources are often ill-equipped against new types of providers (e.g. multi-national companies, e-learning) that operate across the world.

⁸¹ This institution offers training programmes at various VET levels to individuals, companies, organisations and local government agencies, and has trained 10 000 foreign students (including higher VET) and has 20 foreign training centres in Africa, Middle East, Europe and in the Indian ocean.

Public providers might be also less flexible in initiating and organising international cooperation activities than private ones.

An interesting example of how the above is addressed is this of Finland where VET providers are encouraged to have an international strategy incorporated in their overall strategy. This is a prerequisite for receiving financial support from the Finnish National Board of Education (FNBE) for international activities.

5.4.4 Companies

Private companies operating in third countries usually get involved in international cooperation in VET because of the need for qualified future workforce in countries where there is a lack of potential employees with relevant qualifications.

These comprise:

- Individual companies specialising in specific sectors (e.g. Germany-based brown coal mining corporation MIBRAG);
- Multi-national companies (e.g. PSA Peugeot-Citroën, Lego, Total, etc.).

They are involved in cooperation activities in two main ways:

- Setting-up of local training centres: their mission is varied (e.g. production of feasibility studies, provision of technical assistance; funding, cooperation with schools and colleges, etc.);
- Providing key resources in the design or delivery of VET abroad (to support acquisition of skills and competences in a particular sector or export of particular VET models).

A key issue regards their capacity to deliver training that is adapted to the local labour force. This notably requires companies to have a sound understanding of the VET system of the target country(ies), appropriate human resources to deliver training and where possible to cooperate with local VET providers.

An interesting example of how such an exchange of know-how is ensured is this of the Danish company LEGO which cooperates with Skive Technical College on providing training to Mexican toolmakers in its factory in Monterey, Mexico.

Where companies' missions include promoting/exporting their national VET system abroad, a key issue is to ensure that their action is developed jointly with strategy-level organisations as well as with other stakeholders to allow consistent and coordinated approaches.

Interesting examples on how this may be achieved include for instance the establishment of international VET networks initiated by the Finnish Ministry of Education and Culture (China, India, Japan and Russia). The initiative follows the orientation of Finnish businesses and Finnish and local companies are key parties to those networks (the Ministry grants funding to national networks of upper secondary VET providers which have to comprise a minimum of three Finnish VET providers who engage in cooperation with local partners, usually companies). The above-mentioned French "Campus Pro International centres of excellence in technical training" programme which builds on a "framework agreement" between a French company and the French Ministry of Education (under this programme, major French private companies operating abroad provide their "Technical platform" for the VET provision) is another relevant case.

5.4.5 Facilitators of international cooperation in VET

This category groups organisations which facilitate international cooperation in VET by different activities, such as:

- Promoting and marketing VET systems abroad;

- Providing business development support to national VET providers seeking to expand their markets abroad (generating market information and insight, global networking);
- Providing advisory service related to exchange and mobility abroad;
- Support to the provision of training in third countries;
- Capacity building at different levels: regional, national, international.

Some examples are presented in the box below:

Examples of facilitators of international cooperation in VET

- Austrade (a public agency reporting directly to the Minister for Trade and Investment) promotes the Australian education sector in international markets and assist Australian education providers with market information.
- UBIFRANCE, the French agency for export promotion, provides marketing and business development support to French VET providers, e.g. organisation of meetings with buyers and local partners, studies to evaluate the local competition and possible outlets etc.
- Similarly German embassies have provided a platform for private and German public VET actors to meet the foreign demand and showcase their services. In 2012, the German foreign ministry prompted its embassies to initiated VET roundtables.
- The 'ch Stiftung' (<http://www.chstiftung.ch>; 'ch' foundation for federal cooperation) is, amongst others, responsible for implementing European school, vocational and adult education, and youth programmes in Switzerland. It runs the GO internet portal on exchange and mobility (including teachers) and partnership development (between Swiss schools and schools on other continents), along with the related advisory service www.ch-go.ch (the website of the Swiss Competence Centre for Exchange and Mobility).
- In Austria, ACT acts as a service point for Austrian Training Firms on behalf of the Ministry for Education and Women's Affairs (BMBF). ACT is the pedagogic and organisational centre of the Austrian training firm market and the link between the Austrian training firms and the international training firm network. It provides support to the establishment of training firms in other countries as well as know-how transfer.
- In Italy, the Ministry of Economic Development, the Italian Commission for Trade agency ICE and Federmacchine support the Italian machinery manufacturers through marketing and networking activities with companies working in the same sector worldwide. This is done within the framework of the programme 'Machines Italia'. For example, in India and Russia local staff receives professional training on the machines' use and the production systems, while training at students level is promoted through the creation of training centres, in partnership with local VET Institutions.
- UNESCO-UNEVOC Centres supports cooperation and learning among TVET stakeholders around the world, they engage in capacity development (training, consultations and conferences) at different levels and through regional and international cooperation for global TVET development.

5.4.6 Extent to which key actors collaborate among each other and how:

Most countries (DE, CH, UK, FR) engaged strongly in international cooperation in VET have reported a general lack of coordination between public and private agencies and actors active in international cooperation in VET. Few are informed or aware of activities conducted or supervised by other ministries or bodies. In countries where the VET system assigns strong autonomy to regional authorities (for example, in Italy or Spain)

difficulties in the coordination of activities at national level are observed. This is explained with existing differences in the implementation of VET at regional level.

An exception is Germany which has taken steps at high level to address this, via the creation of the Round Table for international VET cooperation and the German Office for International Cooperation in Vocational Education and Training (GOVET). GOVET was created specifically to become the central contact point for national and international VET stakeholders and to act as a "one-stop shop". Switzerland has also taken steps towards better coordination.

6 Types of cooperation activities and some evidence of results

The mapping of national level activities in the field of internationalisation of VET showed a great diversity of actions. In order to better understand what kinds of actions are currently being put in place, the study proposed a typology that differentiates between four main types of activities (see Figure 6 and 0).

This typology of different types of cooperation activities is further presented in the following-sections, on the basis of examples and of evidence of results as identified in the case studies.

The section also discusses the main sectoral focus of cooperation activities.

Figure 6. Types of international cooperation in VET



Source: ICF

Overview of the main types of cooperation activities implemented in the countries reviewed

Cooperation activities at policy level include technical assistance and capacity-building to competent public bodies in third countries. Though these activities EU/EFTA countries typically support third countries to develop a system or a model learning from what exists in the EU/EFTA country. Such activities lead to structural or systemic changes of VET systems. This category covers the following sub-activities:

- Policy dialogue at strategic level, e.g. between ministries or VET standard-setting institutions
- Technical assistance and capacity-building leading to the transfer of EU/EFTA VET models/standards or processes. This can cover:
 - Development of VET qualifications
 - Development of associated curriculum,
 - Development of procedures for the assessment of competences acquired (examinations) and for their validation
 - Development of teaching methods
 - Certification of those examinations
 - Recognition of qualifications.

Cooperation with and between VET organisations (education institutions and companies). This category groups initiatives at operational level between and with

VET organisations (education institutions and companies), at home and abroad, leading to:

- Delivery of training abroad
- Creation of VET training centres abroad
- Capacity-building of VET providers

Contrary to activities categorised as 'policy-level cooperation', activities under this category involve directly VET providers and companies, rather than high-level policymakers.

Cooperation aimed at individuals. This category groups all initiatives which integrate international elements in VET at home, and which can benefit home - as well as - international students, e.g.:

- Outbound and inbound student mobility programmes
- Financial schemes to support student mobility
- Outbound and inbound VET teacher/trainer mobility
- The adaptation of VET programmes to globalisation/ internationalisation of the world of work (e.g. integration of foreign languages and IT/e learning courses).

Information exchange and awareness raising. This category groups transversal cooperation activities such as:

- Information exchanges,
- Market research at operational level to identify needs in third country and see how those could be matched (later via hard cooperation activities), e.g. via fact-finding missions, needs assessments, consultations,
- Marketing activities, e.g. networking activities and showcasing of a particular VET model via forums, congresses etc.,
- Research activities which can be fed into the policy making process.

Table 2 shows examples that were identified through this study in each of the countries that have a strategy or a set of actions for internationalisation of VET.

Table 2. Overview table of the distribution of types of activities identified amongst countries with medium to strong international cooperation in VET

Types of activities	AT	DE	DK	FR	IT	NL	PT	SE	UK	CH	NO	AUS
Cooperation at policy level												
Policy dialogue at strategic level		X	X		X	X	X		X			X
Technical assistance and capacity-building ⁸²	X	X		X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X
Cooperation with and between VET organisations (educational institutions and companies)												
Delivery of training abroad	X		X	X	X				X	X	X	
Creation of VET institutions abroad	X	X	X	X	X			X			X	X
Capacity-building	X		X	X	X	X		X	X	X		X
Cooperation aimed at individuals (VET students and teachers)												
Outbound and inbound <i>student</i> mobility programmes ⁸³		X	X	X	X	X		X		X		X
Outbound and inbound <i>teacher</i> mobility	X		X	X	X	X						X
Adaptation of VET curricula to globalisation/ internationalisation of the world of work					X	X				X		
Information exchange and awareness raising												
Information exchanges	X	X			X					X		
Market research		X		X		X						X
Marketing activities		X		X	X	X				X		
Research activities		X										

Source: ICF own research (based on country fiches)

⁸² This includes the following sub-categories: - The development of VET qualifications by profession - The development of associated curriculum - The development of procedures for the assessment of competences acquired (examinations) and for their validation - The development of teaching methods, further training of teachers - The certification of those examinations - Processes to involve industry closer in the design of VET - The recognition of qualifications.

⁸³ Including financial schemes to support student mobility programme.

6.1 Cooperation at policy level

Cooperation activities at policy level cover activities which aim to inform structural or systemic changes in third countries' VET systems. This includes:

- Policy dialogue at strategic level,
- Technical assistance and capacity-building to competent public bodies leading to the transfer of EU/EFTA VET standards or processes.

6.1.1 Policy dialogue at strategic level

Policy dialogue at strategic level takes place between ministries or VET standard-setting institutions. This covers official delegation trips and roundtables gathering business and VET providers to identify matching potential, establish contacts and collaboration avenues, learn about VET requirements for educators and government priorities.

Such activities can take place at national, bilateral and multilateral level, including in the framework of International Organisations cooperation (e.g. OECD and UNESCO organise this form of cooperation). Some EU/EFTA countries also engage in a policy dialogue with each other, e.g. the Danish Ministry of Education organised a fact-finding to Finland to learn about their VET external actions at the policy and institutional level. Another is planned with BIBB to explore opportunities for collaboration on international VET system development.

Such activities can result in the signature of declarations of intent or a memorandum of understanding or of cooperation, or in the formalisation of cooperation networks. The main aim of these activities is to learn about what other countries are doing, how their policies, structures in VET are set in order to inform developments 'at home' (be it in the third country or in the EU/EFTA country).

Examples of policy dialogue at strategic level

The **U.S.-Denmark Partnership for Vocational Education** came about through an agreement between the U.S. and Danish Education Departments signed in November 2000. The two countries wanted to learn about each other's vocational education systems, exchange information about the most effective programs and practices, and develop joint projects. The agreement emphasizes three key areas:

- Exploring cooperation, information sharing, and research relating to the development of skill standards, curriculum, assessment and teachers/trainers development.
- Using technological resources to improve business and vocational education in colleges, technical and business schools, and other agencies.
- Developing joint projects through learning, organizational and institutional partnerships.

In addition, the project leaders intended to build an online forum where members of the vocational education community in both countries can share ideas and best practices. Mobility programmes for teachers/trainers and students and other professionals were also foreseen.

The German Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF) has **initiated the Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM) Meeting of Ministers of Education (ASEMME)**. The ASEM Education Secretariat, hosted by the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD), coordinates the ASEM educational activities. Germany organised a Vocational Education Training Symposium with special regard to qualifications frameworks in early 2012

In March 2014, the **Netherlands Association of VET colleges (MBO Raad)** participated, for the first time, to a high level delegation to China, led by the Dutch

minister of education and culture, and aimed at strengthening ties with Chinese counterparts and opening doors for Dutch education institutions in China. A **Memorandum of Understanding on educational and scientific cooperation and exchange** was signed with the Chinese Government as a result. It aims at increasing the number of students and teachers/trainers who participate in exchanges and also envisages establishing so-called Living Labs, which connect companies and governments with VET colleges.

An **International Delegation of the Australian Council for Private Education and Training (ACPET) International Delegation to Indonesia** will take place in May 2014. The programme includes:

- detailed briefings on the education landscape and opportunities in Indonesia and on government priorities
- a high-level international forum on opportunities for VET collaboration between Indonesia and Australia staged in collaboration with the Indonesian Association of Private Higher Education (APTISI), featuring a roundtable and business matching with Indonesian providers
- sector-focused site visits and meetings with key industry stakeholders, and industry customers seeking training solutions

This is the culminating point of a process which involved the following stages:

- an Indonesia Australia Skills Training Roundtable in 2013, sponsored by the Australian and Indonesian governments, through Australia Education International (AEI) and the Indonesian Ministry of Education and Culture (MoEC) as well as by Indonesian tyre manufacturer Multistrada. The aim of the roundtable was to brief industry and key education leaders on findings from a skills survey, regarding industry and polytechnic links in Indonesia and skill gap areas across industry
- a 2011 project, led by TAFE Directors Australia, on the Indonesian VET sector and its engagement with business and industry.

6.1.2 Technical assistance and capacity-building

Technical assistance and capacity building is a form of cooperation at policy level that is somewhat more concrete and technically-focused than policy dialogue. It typically concerns the transfer of expertise and of practices at the level of experts in public administrations. Most of the cooperation activities in this area concern qualification and curriculum design as apparent from the list of activities below.

Cooperation leading to the **development of concrete qualification standards** and of **certification processes** has been identified in CH, DE, FR and UK. Through this process the two entities engaged not only develop qualification and certification standards that will be used in the third country but, more importantly, the people involved learn about the processes that underpin qualification development and how to ensure that qualifications standards are responsive to labour market needs. This can be also accompanied by the development **of the associated curriculum** as well as by the development **of procedures for the assessment of competences** (not necessarily those achieved through formal learning) and for their validation (AU, DE, FR).

The work on qualifications standards and curricula can also include learning about **processes to involve industry closer in the design of VET** (DE, NO).

At an even more concrete level, some countries engage in capacity building around **development of teaching methods** and the **further training of teachers/trainers** (AT, CH, DE, NO, UK).

More directly aimed at individuals, some countries have in place this form of cooperation to develop procedures for **recognition of qualifications**. This also covers the validation

of the recognition of a foreign-inspired qualification in a third country or in an EU/EFTA country (also including AU) as well as mutual recognition agreements (DE, FR).

Examples of technical assistance and capacity-building initiatives

Since 2008, the BIBB has supported the development of occupational, training and examination standards and the development of standards for curricula and qualifications development research in India via its cooperation with the "National Skills Development Corporation (NSDC)" in Delhi and the "Central Staff Training and Research Institute" (CSTARI) in Calcutta.

In France, GIP International provides high-level experts drawn from various competent public bodies, e.g. the Ministry responsible for Labour, employment and vocational training, the National Employment Agency (ANPE), the National Agency for Adult Vocational Training (AFPA), the National Institute for Labour, Employment and Vocational Training (INTEPF), for technical support at ministerial level to partner countries. GIP's support covers:

- the training of trainers and of training design;
- Implementation and/or strengthening of adult vocational training in accordance with labour market needs;
- Assistance in the implementation of professional certification tools and accreditation of Prior Learning;
- Strengthening institutional capacities for inspection and orientation.

It has done so via an annual 150 (approx.) expert missions to lead training, to conceive projects and to draft legal texts, via study visits, via expert seminars on various themes, e.g. social norms or the capitalisation of international cooperation actions. In 2013, GIP was notably been present in North Africa and the Middle, in East Asia, including China and India.

The Dutch Centre for Expertise in Vocational Education and Training (ECBO), the CINOP⁸⁴ and the AOC Council (the sector organisation for education in agriculture) and the Government of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia have cooperated to establish a Dairy&Food Polytechnic in Saudi Arabia. The AOC council has additional international projects with a capacity building focus, in India, South Sudan and China. It emphasises the economic rationale behind the internationalisation of its work considering the Netherlands position as one of the top 5 agricultural exporters.

The UK-India Education and Research Initiative is a five year intergovernmental programme with the objective of enhancing the education and research relationship between UK and India. It was launched in 2006. It was extended to the period 2011-2016. It covers:

- Project "Train the trainer": Partnership to re-engineer two courses on Creative & Digital Media and Fashion Design.
- Partnership for the creation of a Virtual Learning Environment on media and animation.

⁸⁴ The Centre for Expertise in vocational education and training (ecbo) has been set up to develop, disseminate and synthesise scholarly and practice-based information on TVET – independently, systematically and to a high quality standard – for the benefit of the education sector and society.

http://www.cinopglobal.com/1_1324_About_CINOP.aspx#sthash.ZVjIuhtV.dpuf ECBO/CINOP

CINOP is an independent, (inter)national research and consultancy agency specialised in lifelong learning, vocational education & training (TVET), adult education, career guidance and human resource development. http://www.cinopglobal.com/1_1324_About_CINOP.aspx#sthash.ZVjIuhtV.dpuf

- Partnership for the development of a course on best practices to optimise the Supply Chain Management in the Global Fashion Industry.

6.1.3 Evidence from case studies of results of cooperation at system level

At system level results include the initiation of changes in approaches to VET design and provision, and informing policy-making. Three case studies provide some evidence of this.

The case study on the U.S.-Denmark Partnership for Vocational Education that following a request from the steering groups in Denmark and in the USA to further analyse labour markets for upper secondary/post-secondary graduates in ICT, the Danish Technological Institute and Regional Technology Strategies (RTS) and Comptia in the USA produced studies jointly funded by the Danish government and the US Department for Education. They covered the role of industry certifications and patterns in emerging skills demands and aimed to support ICT-user industries and ICT development companies. The European section of the study, "Certifications that Blend and Bind" provided an in-depth analysis of emerging e-skills competence frameworks in Europe, such as the e-competence framework from Skills Framework for the Information Age (SFIA) and reportedly contributed to the conceptual development of the E-skills competence framework for professionals. The Danish Confederation of Unions, who was part of the steering group in Denmark at the time, decided subsequently to fund another study to develop scenarios for implementation including new qualification requirements to the teachers.

In the case of French Campus Pro programme in Mexico, collaboration under the programme led to further collaboration leading to the set-up of a national end-of-school career technical qualification for the car industry, on the basis of the French "*baccalauréat professionnel*". Knowledge gained in industrial solutions and equipment has been fed back into the French secondary VET classrooms and curricula when technical teachers return at the end of their missions abroad, making it more up-to-date and industry-relevant. Some changes in third countries' approaches to VET, e.g. relations development with employers and stronger links between educational organisations and employers, were also reported.

The expected added-value of GOVET lies in efficiency gains in resource allocation, in transparency in decision-making, and institutional anchoring of initiatives, which broad engagement and in its operational governance, through the three-level Round Tables, allows. This is expected to contribute to strengthening Germany's position as a strong international partner in VET.

6.2 Cooperation with and between VET organisations (education institutions and companies)

This category groups bilateral or multilateral initiatives at operational level between and with VET organisations. Cooperation at this level is generally initiated by companies or VET providers, rather than system-level actors, e.g. following a business need identified by companies to cover gaps in skillsets amongst a local workforce, or following the opportunity identified by a local VET provider to engage in cooperation with a more 'advanced' peer, or considering the provision of VET abroad as a business service.

Despite the operational level of this type of cooperation, changes introduced (e.g. changes to training of trainers and instructors systems, changes to the management of certification processes etc.), can have knock-on effects of a deeper nature, i.e. a shift towards the involvement of industry in VET, using real-life industrial problems case studies. System-level actors, such as ministries, public funding agencies, local embassies can also be involved, to coordinate actions and input specific expertise or funding.

This is the most diverse category of cooperation activities amongst which:

- **The delivery of training abroad** directly via EU/EFTA educational facilities operating abroad, or indirectly via **public support** (e.g. subsidies) **in favour of VET-delivery abroad** (AT, CH, DK, FR, NO, UK);
- **The design of specific dual VET curricula, in response to EU/EFTA companies' needs**, and on the basis of their service offering, equipment etc.;
- **The creation of VET training centres abroad**, either under the auspice of an established VET institution or of a large company which has the capacity to do so. The VET institution created will apply EU/EFTA (or AU) VET standards and processes (AT, AU, DE, DK, NO, SE);
- **Capacity-building**, e.g. VET courses development, train the trainers activities, regional capacity-building network of TVET providers, (AT, AU, CH, DK, FR). Contrary to activities categorised as policy-level cooperation, the activities below involve VET institutions and companies, rather than high-level policymakers or VET standard-setting bodies.

Examples of cooperation initiatives with and between VET organisations (education institutions and companies)

Design of dual-VET curricula abroad on the basis of companies' needs

The **German-Thai Dual Excellence Education program**, launched in June 2013, offers students a two-year dual vocational education programme involving three German corporations (BMW, Bosch, B. Grimm) in the following sectors: Mechatronics, Mechanics, Automotive, Power Electronics, and Electrics. This VET programme is managed by a Coordination Office which includes the German-Thai Chamber of Commerce (GTCC), the German International Cooperation (GIZ), and the German embassy in Thailand. It acts as a mutual coordination body, e.g. to assure quality standards, adjust curricula for mechatronics, trains the trainers etc., and to search for apprentices and define the training programs based on requirements of the economy.

The '**Swiss Vocational Education and Training Initiative India**' introduces the Swiss dual track model of VET in India. SkillSonics – a private company – worked with enterprises to identify and skill entry-level and existing technicians, adapt Swiss training materials to the Indian context, oversee the training of trainers and instructors, and manages the certification process. VET programmes have been developed on the basis of private-public partnerships with partners from private industry (8 Swiss companies - Bobst, Bühler, Burckhardt Compression, Rieter, ABB, ACC/Holcim, Starrag, Nestlé - and 2 Indian companies - EFD Induction, GMM Pfadler). The initiative was supported by the Swiss State Secretariat for Education, Research and Innovation (SERI). VET programmes developed under the 'Swiss Vocational Education and Training Initiative India': Comprehensive programme (1-3 years): mechanical, electrical, welding and fabrication, machining, painting and Accelerated programme (5-120 days): work planning, time management, safety, housekeeping, business reporting.

Delivery of VET abroad

NORAD runs a **subsidy scheme for Norwegian companies who wish to establish themselves in a foreign country. Part of this subsidy scheme is aimed at training the local labour force** so that appropriate skills are available to the Norwegian company in question. NORAD can cover up to 50% of the training cost up to a certain amount, while the company in question covers the other half. The scheme is not aimed at any specific sectors but is limited to countries of priority in the Norwegian development cooperation. All Norwegian companies can apply for co-financing.

Bühler is a Swiss manufacturer (plant, equipment, and services for processing basic foods and for manufacturing advanced materials) which **also provides 12 training disciplines** worldwide and **Innovative Distance Learning Programme** - Class Unlimited™. It has technology and training centres in Uzwil (Switzerland) as well as in

centres of competence in the USA, South Africa, China and India.

Creation of a VET training centre abroad

France's "**Campus Pro International centers of excellence in technical training**" programme is based on a "framework agreement" between a French company and the French Ministry of Education to provide professional training abroad. The design and delivery of VET abroad, according to French standards, is implemented via a tripartite cooperation process, whereby:

- Major French private companies operating abroad provide their "Technical platform" for the VET provision,
- The French Ministry of Education provides training curricula and certification. It also provides technical teachers from the national education system under the "Technical teachers without borders" programme, whereby training activities/technical teachers are sourced from 'Lycées Techniques et Professionnels', with support from the Association Française pour le Développement de l'Enseignement Technique (AFDET)
- The local partner (Education Ministry and local education partners (department/local authority) provides the premises, logistics and a team of teachers.

For example, PSA Peugeot-Citroën has supported the development of a training centre in automotive after-sales services in Beijing. Salesmen were trained as well as Chinese teachers who were then able to train students on the basis of French educational standards. Other examples exist in the energy industry, in Product Lifecycle Management, Innovation, Design, fashion, visual communication, tourism, water, environment, waste management, health sciences.

Rogaland Training & Education Centre (RKK) - a cooperation network comprising 30 VET providers from Rogaland County in **Norway** - facilitates long-term VET cooperation in Angola (since 2009), Kazakhstan (since 2004) and Azerbaijan (since 2013). The projects are mainly funded through NORAD, with co-funding from Statoil – the State oil and gas company - and other Norwegian companies. In Kazakhstan, the project has built a training facility to support VET that meets the international skill requirement in the oil and gas industry. Capacity building is another important part of the project in terms of updating curricula, training teachers and instructors, supporting cooperation between VET providers and industry employers and developing apprenticeship arrangements. The project has resulted in concrete advice on VET policy development at government level.

Festo – a private German industrial control and automation company which sells pneumatic and electric transducers primarily to the automation industry, established in 2013 the Festo Training Centre Jinan, located inside the Festo manufacturing base in Jinan, the first full-scale training centre Festo has established outside of Germany. It is thus able to implement the German Dual System of TVET in its Chinese production plant in Jinan via set-up of the training facilities, co-operation with schools and colleges and recruitment of suitable trainees.

The "**Machines Italia**" programme, promoted by the Ministry of Economic Development, the Italian Commission for Trade agency ICE and Federmacchine, aims to support the deployment of Italian machinery manufacturers abroad, via support to the creation of training centres, in partnership with local VET Institutions, e.g. in India and Russia, so that local staff can be trained in the machines' use and the companies' production systems.

Multilateral cooperation between VET institutions

The **East Asia TVET Network's** brings TVET providers from 18 East Asian countries together. It is led by TAFE Directors Australia, on behalf of the Australian government,

and the Korean Research Institute for Vocational Education and Training, on behalf of the Republic of Korea. Its purpose is to build and support the capacity of TVET institutions in the East Asia region to meet the skill demands of employers and learners. TDA is currently in negotiations with UNESCO and the World Federation of Colleges and Polytechnics to align their networks with this East Asia initiative.

Bilateral cooperation between companies

In 2009, **GDF SUEZ and Gazprom signed a cooperation agreement in the field of the training and development of their employees**, in order to assist each other in the organization and implementation of the training of their respective employees in Russia and in France.

6.2.1 Evidence from case studies of results of cooperation between VET providers and partner companies

Results at provider level include profile raising and improvements in the effectiveness of their, on account e.g. of the modernisation of their curriculum, their gaining access to and using new technologies, etc. Results for companies are availability of an upgraded labour force and in some cases, improvements in industrial solutions following Interactions between students and the industry. The text below provides some examples as identified in some of the case studies.

Under the French Campus Pro programme, reported results include changes in design and delivery of VET in host VET institution: VET is less theoretical and more relevant to employers' and students' needs. Dassault's PLMCCs for example stress the use of practical case studies to allow students to be fully operational. If successful, Campus pro centres are recognised amongst local education partners / put on the map as a specialised or state-of-the art training centre close to the industry. For example CPUT is now reportedly a recognised organisation for CATIA⁸⁵ training amongst other larger South African universities. Students can question methodologies used by industry (e.g. design for disposal for goods which is embedded in a software) and this can be fed back to industry to e.g. better adapt to local market requirements. An impact for Dassault is the dissemination of the LCM (life cycle management) concept worldwide and training of students in its CATIA software, Dassault's integrated suite of Computer Aided Design (CAD).

Under MODUL's International Course in Hotel Management (ICHM), most students enrolled currently originate from outside of Europe (Asia, India, Kenya, Zimbabwe, Nigeria, Iran and China) whereas in the past the numbers of students from Austria and international students were balanced. It thus seems that interest in the school from international students has increased and that the school is recognised internationally.

The AFS organised-exchanges year for apprentices (CH) provides participating Swiss companies a pool of trained graduates equipped in skills which make them likely to be deployed in those companies' external operations. This contributes to companies' successful external operations.

⁸⁵ <http://www.3ds.com/products-services/catia/>

6.3 Cooperation aimed at individuals

This category groups mobility initiatives targeted at individuals, be they home or international students or VET teachers/trainers. Mobility schemes can vary in objectives pursued, e.g. exposure to different approaches, the delivery of capacity-building, the acquisition of a specific skill or qualification, and thus in length, format, VET level at which it occurs, etc. Mobility can happen during the study or practical training period of VET. It is generally integrated to a specific VET curricula (rather than separate from it) and recognised (credit transfer).

Public authorities and companies, which support mobility schemes aim to increase the employability of their students, apprentices/employees following the transfer of skills, acquired through their international or internationally-oriented experience. Those can be knowledge of other economic regions and business practices, languages, international awareness, inter-cultural sensitivity etc. The inter-cultural dimension, with a focus on creating inter-cultural ties and mutual understanding, may also be more or less strong, depending on the funding source or lead organisation. Mobility programmes funded by companies generally aim for the individual sent abroad to engage in a solid knowledge or skill transfer.

For VET providers, such actions increase the number of home and international VET students, attracted by international study or work opportunities, and thus increase their revenue.

Activities identified include:

- **Outbound and inbound *student/trainee* mobility programmes.** Different types of mobility can be distinguished: short-term mobility (few weeks) generally at upper-secondary level, longer term recognised mobility (at post-secondary VET level), traineeships abroad integrated to VET programmes. The choice of the country can be freely decided by the student or determined jointly with the training company or educational institution, which, upon the student's return, benefit from their experience (e.g. textile sourcing or oil producing countries). In some cases, the exchange is reciprocal, i.e. companies or the educational institution both send and host students/trainees from both countries. The individual may also get support to find an apprentice place abroad. (AU, CH, DE, DK, ES, SE). In other cases, the country is a chosen destination for foreign VET students' work placements, as per the country's sectoral strengths, e.g. tourism/hotel/accommodation in Cyprus⁸⁶. Some schemes support traineeships or placements of VET *graduates* (ES). In some countries funding to support mobility is provided directly to individuals (DK) or to educational institutions (AU, SE). The funding is generally used to cover costs associated to taking part in either a study period or an apprentice period abroad (NL).
- **Outbound and inbound *teacher/trainer* mobility.** This covers further training or 'train the VET trainers' types of activities (AU, AT) as well the sending of specialist teachers/trainers to deliver professional training activities abroad within home companies operating abroad or partner education facilities (FR).

⁸⁶ Agreements have been signed with Georgia, Costa Rica, Kazakhstan, Iran, Israel, Jordan, Thailand and more recently China

Examples of initiatives targeted at individuals

Outbound mobility of VET students

In **Switzerland**, the **AFS**⁸⁷ - a non-for-profit organisation which aims to create **intercultural learning opportunities** - organises exchanges for Swiss young people enrolled in dual-track apprenticeships. Learners spend their exchanges in a country that is of strategic value to their training company, which upon their return, benefit from their experience. Companies which have participated in the sending of their apprentices include: Lonza AG, Sulzer Textil AG. Countries of destination are mainly BRIC⁸⁸ countries, including Thailand, Philippines, and Malaysia.

In the **Netherlands**, the **Wereld Proeftuinen** programme (2010-2011) was established by the Ministry of education, culture and science and the Ministry of economic affairs, agriculture and innovation with a two year budget of EUR 720.000 to finance work placements of VET students in India, Turkey (as well as in France and the UK). The programme was restricted to the sectors trade, catering, security, technology, logistics and health care. About 100 students' and teachers' mobility arrangements per year were funded.

In **Sweden**, the **Atlas Praktik** programme, supports on-the-job placements **abroad** for upper secondary VET students. VET providers can apply for financial support to send their students abroad in a long-term job placement as an integrated part of their education. It is the VET provider that applies for programme support to be able to offer their students such placements. The programme supports placements all over the world. However, placements outside the EU/EEA area are given a higher priority and receive more financial support.

Reciprocal mobility programme

The German-Israeli Exchange of Experts in Vocational Education and Training is a reciprocal exchange of trainees from both countries. It is a new part of the German-Israeli programme for cooperation in vocational education, which was established over 40 years ago. In 2012, 14 young Israeli trainees visited Germany. They worked on automotive or electrical industry projects with young German trainees, while getting to know companies from Koblenz to Freiburg which offer training programmes. German trainees went to Israel for three weeks a similar experience later in the year.

Outbound mobility of VET teachers/trainers

As part of the French "Campus Pro International centers of excellence in technical training" programme, technical teachers and experts, e.g. inspectors or works supervisor/ specialists in a discipline from a 'lycée technique' from the French national education system can, through the **French 'Technical Teachers without borders'**, participate in professional training activities abroad on behalf of French companies operating abroad. The teacher/expert can be called up for up to 4 months. The partner company commits to include, within this scheme, 2-3 local technical teachers in the country of its implementation, to ensure they benefit from those training and teaching methods. The company also commits to support additional training necessary for the teacher to get accustomed to the company's methods/specific technics for the products it manufactures or sells. Courses can be taught at all skills levels: from layman to the upper/engineer or technician level, and in all disciplines of science and technical engineering or economics-commercial management. The technical specifications are

⁸⁷ <http://www.afs.ch/>

⁸⁸ Acronym for Brazil, Russia, India and China.

determined by the company within the “**Campus Pro International centers of excellence in technical training**” programme.

6.3.1 Evidence from case studies of results of cooperation at the level of the individual

Results at the level of individuals include the upgrading hard (technical or pedagogical) and soft (cultural awareness) skills, and thus increased productivity and employability, opportunities and sense of fulfilment. The text below provides some examples identified in some of the case studies.

Under the Campus Pro Programme – example of Dassault-CPUT- French Ministry of education LCMCC at CPUT in Cape Town, students or employees trained generally receive an education of a higher quality than what exists locally, this on account of the VET curriculum’s adaptation to the company’s products and know-how and access to state-of-the art technology which can sometimes be very expensive. Student thus gain a comparative advantage in comparison to other students on the local job market. Partner companies rapidly sees the effect of participation to the training in its employees’ productivity and added value (are new skills and knowledge acquired or not). Capacity-building also occurs at the level of French technical teachers, to the benefit of the French secondary VET system upon their return home. French technical teachers develop new competences, technical ones on the basis of the state-of-the-art ones used by industry, and transversal ones such as leadership and management ones (in the position of co-directors of the training centre). Most *Professeurs Sans Frontières* (PSFs) have also reportedly often been promoted upon their return within the French ‘éducation nationale’, some became ‘technical directors/ of a *lycée* or an inspector or a lifelong training advisor (*conseiller en formation continue*).

Under the AFS organised exchanges year for apprentices (CH), apprentices’ reportedly improve intercultural competences and language skills; benefits of having an enlarged professional network.

6.4 Information exchange and awareness raising

This category groups transversal cooperation activities aimed at information exchanges and awareness raising. They can precede deeper forms of cooperation, outlined above, by contributing to agenda-setting, and can also be run in parallel in support to those. Such activities include:

- **Information exchanges and networking at operational level;**
- **Market research** at operational level to identify needs in third country and see how those could be matched (later via hard cooperation activities), e.g. via fact-finding missions, needs assessments, consultations;
- **Marketing activities**, e.g. networking activities and showcasing of a particular VET model via forums, congresses etc.;
- **Research activities** which can be fed into the policy making process.

Examples of cooperation activities categorised as ‘other’

Information exchange and networking

Australia and Germany (via BIBB) engage in publication and information-sharing and networking on topics of mutual interest, e.g. on qualification frameworks and apprenticeship systems.

Market research:

Austrade publishes research reports, surveys and newsletters on international cooperation in VET. For example it conducted:

- Research exploring the challenges and risks involved in engaging locally in India's VET market. The *Unlocking India's Potential: Commercially successful vocational education and training* research paper by Austrade and Sannam S4 includes discussion on ways to structure a business model to overcome challenges and risks, and features three successful models of VET delivery as case studies
- The ASEAN Employer Survey in early 2013, with the aim of interviewing employers on their skill needs, current training arrangements and extent of engagement with local and international providers.

Marketing:

Starting in 2014, the Swiss Confederation organised an **annual congress – the International Congress on Vocational and Professional Education and Training**⁸⁹. Its central aim is to promote the Swiss dual system at the international level.

The **programme 'iMOVE (International Marketing of Vocational Education) - Training - Made in Germany'** was launched by the Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF) as part of the government's strategy to support German VET providers for international competition. iMOVE aims to advertise German expertise in initial continuous VET abroad, to establish contacts and collaboration opportunities between German training providers and public and private interested parties, via e.g. delegation visits and participation in trade fairs in countries with a great demand for qualification; market research, market monitoring etc.

The **Dutch Foundation for the Cooperation of Vocational Education and Training and the Labour Market (SBB)**⁹⁰ regularly hosts foreign delegations and presents the Dutch qualifications system in VET as well as issues related to the recognition and comparability of foreign VET qualifications.

Showcasing

In the US, where VET is a state competence, the **German embassy organised tours in different states during which German companies and VET specialists** presented respectively their skills needs and how the German dual system could respond to those, in view of spurring investments in the field.

6.5 Sectoral scope

Next to looking at what types of activities countries engage in, the study also looked at the sectors concerned by international cooperation in VET. The examples reviewed cover a broad range of sectors as shown in Annex 5.

According to the information collected in this study, the most common sectors for international cooperation in VET include: construction, tourism/catering and automotive industry. The figure below outlines the seven most commonly reported sectors for international cooperation in VET and the EU/EFTA Member States where cooperation activities are supported.

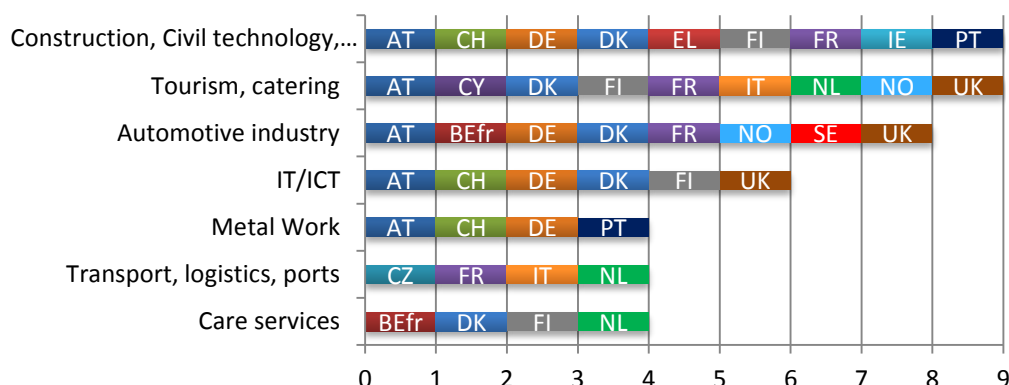
It is interesting to note that the cooperation covers manufacturing/ industrial but also services sectors. The analysis of the different examples reviewed shows that cooperation in VET is in particular being developed in those sectors where there are important

⁸⁹ <http://www.vpet-congress.ch/>

⁹⁰ It is a public-private partnership between the associations of education institutions and the social partners.

technological or process innovations that require skilled labour at all levels of the production/ service delivery chain.

Figure 7. Most commonly reported sectors for cooperation by EU/EFTA Member States



Source: ICF

Legend: boxes represent EU/EFTA individual Member States (country's acronym) where cooperation activities exist in the sector(s).

The sectoral scope of cooperation is determined by types of industries and services which are currently exported (car, construction) or which have an international dimension (tourism, transport, ports) or for which some of the production or maintenance is outsourced abroad (IT). Cooperation in VET in the automotive sector for instance has been determined by new growth markets, in South-East Asia and Latin America, thus prompting needs in production and maintenance skills amongst the local labour force. International cooperation also occurs in sectors where expertise lies abroad, e.g. the Mercantec College in Denmark has established a partnership in advanced manufacturing and car mechanics with community college partners in Detroit. The Norwegian ministry of foreign affairs cooperates with the Vietnam chamber of commerce to implement the Norwegian VET model in Vietnam in the tourism and car industry sectors.

Further examples are provided below. In the construction sector, there are examples of cooperation between education institutions that in some cases involve governments. It is the case of the VALO project that aimed at introducing the Finnish VET model to VET providers and Russian companies in the tourism and construction sectors. In this sector, cooperation initiatives involve emerging and developing countries. As it can be deduced from the previous examples, institutions also cooperate in the tourism sector. In this case, cooperation is mostly developed with industrialised and emerging countries. As for IT and ICT, there is cooperation at policy level (e.g. Memorandum of Understanding signed between the Vietnamese and Danish ministries of education) and institutional cooperation. As an example from the private sector, the Institute of Economic Development (WIFI) provides know-how and consulting and has exported the Austrian dual education system to the Shanghai Information Technology College. Cooperation in this sector is mostly carried out with emerging countries.

7 Factors of successful international cooperation in VET

The below sections present some factors which can contribute to or hinder the effects of international cooperation in VET. Those were identified mainly in the case studies.

7.1 Success factors

Initiatives embedded in a wider outreach strategy (sectoral or geographical) or a coherent set of actions (*Campus Pro* programme and *Professeurs Sans Frontières*) have been more successful than haphazard and stand-alone initiatives. The integration in a wider cooperation framework is an indicator of the level of maturity or ambition of cooperation and therefore of resources and support available elsewhere to contribute to its success.

An equal level of commitment on both sides of the partnerships has been highlighted as a pre-condition to successful cooperation. Commitment at strategic level is more so important to secure sustained commitment at all levels of the cooperation. For example, the earmarking, since 2009, of a fixed item of annual DKK 3 million in the Danish finance bill to the US-Denmark cooperation is a clear signal of high level commitment. Similarly the German-Thai Dual Excellence Education programme (GTdee) is based on a 2012 Memorandum of Understanding on Education Cooperation between the Ministry of Education of the Kingdom of Thailand and the Foreign Office of the Federal Republic of Germany. Commitment must also be provided by employers for their engagement in VET design and provision, and reversely, an openness from State actors to have social partners involved in developing the VET offer.

Pouring the necessary resources to adapt a model or VET offer to specific needs and contexts has been highlighted as a success factor. German cooperation stresses that whilst the success of the German dual VET system is determined by institutional structures specific to Germany, this is not easily replicable in other educational and economic systems and it is key to invest important resources to understand needs and contextual factors which determine those, via broad engagement and consultation. Similarly the tailored nature of services provided by MODUL's international consultancy services and under the French *Campus Pro* programme⁹¹ has also been flagged as success factors. In comparison, the GTdee programme provides a common mechatronics curriculum, developed on the basis of German standards, to the benefit of four major companies and several local VET colleges in Thailand. The GTdee programme has established a **common framework** when prior to the launch of the GTdee programme, German companies in Thailand had their individual vocational trainings. This also provides economies of scale and an added-value and remains tailored to needs.

A teacher of trainer's capacity to work across distinct organisational and geographical 'cultures' is also a key success factor. In the case of the French *Campus Pro* programme and *Professeurs Sans Frontières*, the added value of involving in the programme a technical teacher from the French ministry of education, rather than an in-house expert from the partner company, was reported to lie in his/her pedagogical skills and ability to transform technical content into pedagogical content and adapt it to the particularities of the local curriculum and context⁹². In the absence of additional incentives *at the level of individuals* to participate in cooperation, a full understanding of

⁹¹ The format of the programme is flexible and adapted to the particular training needs of the company, as well as of the partner host educational organisation and partner country.

⁹² e.g. writer of a course module on a new technology in logistics which few experts at Peugeot know of, in order to make it comprehensible to a training audience abroad. The course module produced by the PSF was then validated by the Peugeot experts, and could later feed and update courses in logistics in secondary schools.

the initiative, as well as support from the hierarchy are motivational factors. In the case of the French Campus Pro programme, the case study revealed that key individuals (drivers of the process) within the local host educational partners should be convinced of the utility of taking part in the programme and fully understand its functioning as they generally do not receive any additional incentives to participate. Similarly involvement in the British Council ISPs has been reported as an additional commitment to participants' regular duties.

Outreach activities (networking or visibility actions) conducted by local representations to coordinate and promote cooperation have also been key success factors. Embassies have been mentioned in several initiatives as contact points and facilitators between different parties. Their support reportedly varied according to the importance assigned to VET in the country of origin. Whilst the French embassy in South Africa was supportive of the Campus Pro programme, this was not always the case in other partner countries. In South Africa, the programme reportedly ranked lower than pure science type of cooperation, e.g. with CNRS in particle physics. This was in contrast to the German embassies which drive the process of cooperation in VET, e.g. by bringing interested public and private parties together around local round tables, coordinating and communicating with partner authorities and Ministries etc. Where public authorities did not take a leading role in outreach activities, partner companies took over, e.g. Dassault Systemes led relationship-building between local companies looking for a set of skills and graduates from the PLMCCs, via promotional events to showcase the PLMCC's realisations. This interaction has led to the development of internship opportunities, and the integration of real-life industrial problems in the training curriculum.

7.2 Obstacles

The case studies revealed that the time needed to establish cooperation, to build common interests, commitment and understanding on all sides had sometimes been underestimated. This relates to the divide between the culture of 'business', of 'education' and of 'intercultural exchanges' which needs to be bridged in the field of international cooperation in VET and require specific skills and profiles. For example the British Council is a cultural rather than a business organisation and International skills partnerships and their transition into commercial projects would reportedly benefit from a focus from a business perspective.

Mobility to study or work in the EU and foreign countries was reported as having been delayed or complicated by visa issues and permission to work and by differences in labour market regulations.

Some initiatives would benefit from additional marketing or support from public authorities. Public officials tend to prioritise public initiatives over private ones such as the Swiss apprentices mobility programme implemented by the AFS. French Technical without borders could benefit from additional support to prepare their settling-in their country of destination.

Companies must be convinced of the added value of the programmes they support (where applicable). In the case of the Swiss apprentices mobility programme implemented by the AFS, demand is relatively low on account notably of the interruption in the apprenticeship scheme it creates for companies (one employee less in their training system who may need some further support upon his/her reintegration, e.g. will they still be able to handle machinery?).

Finally, mobility funding can be an obstacle for interested companies and for the student or his or her parents if they have to partially or fully cover the costs. The AFS-implemented exchange year costs CHF 10.000-12.000 (Euro 8,000-10,000). Companies sometimes cover half of the costs, the rest is borne by the apprentice's parents; AFS also offers small study grants. MODUL's two-year ICHM programme's tuition fee amount to 12,000 Euro.

8 International organisations' strategies and initiatives

Since the 1980's there has been a growing policy focus on the impact, risks and opportunities afforded by globalisation. During that period the influence of multilateral and supranational organisations tied into the system of global governance has grown in prominence. Education and particularly vocational education is having an important role to play in these processes, with investments in people (human capital), skills and knowledge seen as a prerequisite to participation in the global economy.

The growing importance paid to technical and vocational education and training is mirrored in the strategies and initiatives of the international organisations/fora (ASEM, ILO, OECD, UNESCO, the World Bank) which have been covered through this study. Although not covered by the study in detail, some information about important recent activities of the G20 is included as well.

This section includes the main findings of the analysis of the international organisations fiches produced (see Annex 2 for details). It is structured as follows:

- Background information on the five international organisations
- Framework for international cooperation in VET
- The role of VET in the mission of the organisations
- Support to VET reform- examples of practice
- Conclusions and policy pointers

8.1 Background information on the international organisations and fora (ILO, UNESCO, World Bank, OECD, ASEM, G20)

The organisations have different origins, governance structures and missions. This is reflected in their history, strategic focus, country coverage, and in their initiatives in the field of vocational education and training. The terminologies the organisations deploy differ between TVET (technical and vocational education) or simply VET (vocational education and training).⁹³

UNESCO, ILO, and the **World Bank** form all three part of the United Nations (UN) system. ILO is the oldest of the three institutions. It was created in 1919 as part of the treaty of Versailles that ended the 1st World war and is a tripartite institution (governments, employers and workers). The World Bank and UNESCO were respectively created in 1944 and 1945.

OECD was created in 1961. It has 34 members from advanced world economies. The table below provides a comparative overview of the organisations and their characteristics.

ASEM was created in 1996 as an interregional forum between the EU plus Norway and Switzerland, the ASEAN countries, plus the following ten countries: China, Japan, the Republic of Korea, India, Mongolia, Pakistan, Australia, Russia, New Zealand and Bangladesh. The European Commission is one of the founding partners.

As UN organisations, the operations of the World Bank, ILO and UNESCO have some similarities, but also differences:

- ILO deals with labour, and it is through the perspective of labour and the quality of work that they focus on VET.
- UNESCO aims to contribute to peace and security by promoting international collaboration through education, science, and culture, and TVET is embedded in their education agenda and has gained importance in recent years.

⁹³ For the purpose of this study, the terminology used is VET. TVET has been as an exception referred to across this section when the information regards international organisations which use this terminology.

- The World Bank comprises a group of five legally separate but affiliated institutions. The World Bank is a vital source of financial and technical assistance to developing countries around the world, so TVET is indirectly a priority as part of economic and technical development.

G20 was founded in 1999 with the aim of studying, reviewing, and promoting high-level discussion of policy issues pertaining to the promotion of international financial stability. It is an international forum for the governments and central bank governors from 20 major economies (Argentina, Australia, Brazil, Canada, China, France, Germany, India, Indonesia, Italy, Japan, Mexico, Russia, Saudi Arabia, South Africa, South Korea, Turkey, the United Kingdom and the United States and the EU represented by the European Commission and by the European Central Bank). In 2010, the G20 labour and employment ministers recommended to the G20 leaders to prepare the workforces for future challenges and opportunities. They stated that education, lifelong learning, job training and skills development strategies should be prioritised and linked to growth strategies. Better anticipation and matching of skills to jobs can help the workforce benefit from post-crisis restructuring and new opportunities.

ILO, UNESCO and the World Bank have a similar **strategic understanding** of VET as an instrument in poverty alleviation and as a means to support the livelihood of individuals. Many developing economies (and also emerging economies) are characterised by a relatively big informal sector, and often a small private sector. To attract inward investment, the skills of the workforce, particularly mid-level skills, can enable the location of foreign firms. In that respect VET can contribute to sustainable growth. Since the three UN organisations focus on developing and emerging economies, their approach is broad in scope including both the informal sector and the primary sectors as well as emerging new sectors of economic activity. All three institutions prioritise strategies to support the creation of **more efficient high-quality demand-oriented VET systems**, which has been a focus point both in the ILO and the UNESCO reviews.

Whereas UNESCO and the World Bank prioritise developing and emerging economies in their VET focus, **OECD's** remit focuses on advanced economies. The organisation has carried out some work on VET in the early 1990's. Its current activities on VET are relatively new. They emerge from OECD's previous work on **school-to-work transition and on guidance and** a shared concern of OECD member countries that despite increased policy awareness about the importance of human capital as a driver of country competitiveness, there was not sufficient focus on the outcomes of increased investments in education in terms of transition to labour markets. The poor quality of comparative data on VET was another concern that led the OECD to develop activities in the sector (see also below section 8.4.4).

The Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM) is somewhat different than the other international organisations as it is a **platform primarily for high level information exchange**, and it is the only one of the organisations where the European Commission is a direct member. Cooperation exists both at the multilateral level, highly welcomed by smaller countries, and at the bilateral level.

Table 3. Key facts on the 6 international organisations/fora and their (T)VET-related actions, Source: ICF and partners

Key organisation facts	Basic organisation information	Year of creation	When did (T)VET become a priority	Focus of (T)VET actions
ASEM: Interregional forum Three pillars of cooperation (incl. education)	EU 28, Switzerland, Norway, the European Commission plus 10 Asian countries.	1996	Focus on VET within the context of lifelong learning (since ASEM meeting 2011) but higher focus of attention on higher education	Agenda-setting and information exchange Lifelong Learning including Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) and Engaging Business and Industry in Education (alongside Quality Assurance and Recognition and Balanced Mobility) are key work areas of the ASEM education Process.
OECD: a 'forum of countries committed to democracy and the market economy, providing a setting to compare and share policy experiences and co-ordinate domestic and international policies.	34 Member countries	1961	First reference in 1994. A multi-year work programme was developed following an informal meeting of Ministers in 2007.	Changing patterns of global competition driving a need for a stronger basis for comparisons of VET systems through data collection, research and policy reviews.
UNESCO: UN organisation for Education, Scientific and Cultural Cooperation.	195 members 9 associate members	1945	First reference in 1962 recommendation. An explicit strategy for TVET was developed after the Executive Board meeting in 2008 (presented at Board Meeting in 2009) ⁹⁴	Provision of upstream policy advice and capacity development Conceptual clarification of skills development and monitoring Clearing house and informing on global TVET debate.
The International Labour Organization (ILO) is devoted to promoting social justice and internationally recognised	The only tripartite U.N. agency with government, employer, and worker	1919	ILO's focus on TVET started around 2000, leading to the adoption of a conceptual and policy framework linking skills development to improved	The focus on VET is set within the context of decent employment creation including self-employment. The ILO contributes to the development of

⁹⁴ See also: Kenneth King (2008) Eight Proposals for a Strengthened Focus on Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) in the Education for All (EFA) Agenda

Key organisation facts	Basic organisation information	Year of creation	When did (T)VET become a priority	Focus of (T)VET actions
human and labour rights, advancing the creation of decent work and economic and working conditions.	representatives 185 Member States.		productivity, employment growth and development in 2008. This framework advises countries to sustain 'this virtuous circle' by: matching training to labour market demands, providing opportunities for lifelong learning, and using skills development to drive innovation and thus future job growth.	apprentice systems through reviews, publications and through collaboration with G20, OECD and UNESCO.
The World Bank: UN International institution, which provides loans to developing countries for capital programmes	188 members	1944	First reference in 1991. The 'Strategy 2020 Learning For All' explicitly refers to skills and competences (and specific TVET skills related to an occupation).	Main goal reduction of poverty Focus on skills for the world of work- not only and to support entrepreneurship- not only for new sectors of economic activities, but also for agriculture, fisheries and the informal sector ⁹⁵ .
G20	19 individual countries: Argentina, Australia, Brazil, Canada, China, France, Germany, India, Indonesia, Italy, Japan, Mexico, Russia, Saudi Arabia, South Africa, South Korea, Turkey, the United Kingdom and the United States along with the EU. Spain is a permanent guest country.	1999	G20 Summit in Toronto in 2010 welcomed the recommendations of the Labour and Employment Ministers, who met in April 2010, and the training strategy prepared by the ILO in collaboration with the OECD.	"A training strategy that will help equip the workforce with the skills required for the jobs of today and those of tomorrow".

⁹⁵ See also: TVET Thematic Group (2010) Background paper for the Education Sector Strategy 2020, World Bank.

8.2 The role of VET in the mission of the organisations

The focus on VET is aligned to the missions and work programmes of the organisations. Whereas ASEM traditionally and still has a strong focus on higher education, the other four international organisations have traditionally due to their focus on sustainable economic development seen VET as an enabler to sustainable economic growth.

For a while OECD has focused on the role of human capital as a driver of competitiveness and more recently on the role of human capital in innovation. ILO, UNESCO and the World Bank have seen TVET as a means to tackle inequality, unemployment and underemployment. Technological change and growing integration of economies globally have posed new skills requirements for both developing and developed economies.

Across all the international organisations there is in addition a shared recognition that there is a gap in general knowledge about quality VET systems and practices, in particular when it comes to comparable system knowledge including performance based data. This is also one of the reasons why in particular ILO, UNESCO and OECD collaborate on different topics for example on **apprenticeship and its role in combatting youth unemployment** and on **skills for employment** to improve the efficiency and outcomes of VET systems. In that context it is noticeable that even though the OECD, UNESCO and ILO have conducted VET policy reviews, there have not been any explicit attempts to work on a shared methodology, and the approaches vary considerably.

Whereas the ILO review has focused solely on apprenticeship systems in 11 countries,⁹⁶ the OECD and the UNESCO reviews have focused on TVET as a whole. OECD has conducted by far the greatest number of reviews including reviews on VET at the post-secondary level.

As mentioned above, the five organisations share similarities in terms of their prioritisation of VET as part of their mission, but there are also differences. From a cross institutional analysis of their respective priorities and activities in VET in recent years a number of messages emerge, which are also of relevance to the European policy focus on internationalisation of VET. These are briefly summarised below, prior to a presentation of exemplary activities of the five organisations.

8.2.1 Situating global cooperation in VET

The growing focus on VET in the international organisations' strategies and activities has some common elements which are outlined below.

Key messages

- There are **benefits of bilateral and multilateral cooperation to improve the evidence base** about what works in VET, taking into account that the comparable international knowledge base about VET is moderate compared to both higher education and basic education, and in particular when it comes to comparable statistics.
- **Quality VET** improves labour market outcomes and prepares individuals for a changing labour market as employed or self-employed, including employment and self-employment in the informal sector. **Global economic integration**, the rate of diffusion of technologies, and new work organisation practices enabled by ICTs have **increased the demands for skilled workers** across developed, emerging and developing economies, and at the same time has also led to

⁹⁶ ILO (2013) Towards a model apprenticeship framework. A Comparative Analysis of Apprenticeship systems, http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---asia/---ro-bangkok/---sro-new_delhi/documents/publication/wcms_234728.pdf

unemployment in poorly paid service jobs and in precarious jobs in the informal economy. To improve employability over time, skilled workers need a broader skills base including solid foundation skills, entrepreneurship, ICT and green skills, and VET pathways should not be dead-ends.

- With the **growing policy focus on VET** and in particular **work-based learning** and **apprenticeship** as a means to combat youth unemployment, apprenticeship is increasingly seen to be relevant not only for tackling youth unemployment. **Policy coordination** in particular between labour market policies, economic policies and education policies is advocated for VET to function effectively as a policy lever in tackling unemployment.
- The **image of VET has to be improved**. Means to do so are horizontal and vertical permeability; engaging employers (social partners) in governance, co-funding, in defining standards, and in the development of curriculum.

The priority given to VET by the three UN organisations is set in a context where on one hand the primary priority is on achieving the millennium goals regarding basic education. However, as more countries achieve these goals, it is crucial for geopolitical reasons that the youth population acquire the foundations for sustaining a livelihood.

It is worth emphasising that the different organisations all see VET as a means to improving working conditions and transforming sectors towards a greener economy. For the OECD, VET is strongly linked to an agenda of sustainable competitiveness, emphasising that an improved skills base will not in itself lead to growth and improved competitiveness if there is not a focus on the demand side of the equation - that is how companies make use of and further develop the workforce through their work organisation and leadership practices. Based on the outcomes of PIAAC⁹⁷, OECD countries are urged to develop skills utilisation strategies. ILO has to some extent taken up that same agenda in the context of decent work and sustainable work organisation practices.

Since the emergence of the financial and economic crisis, more emphasis is put on seeing education policies not in isolation, but more in synergy with economic and labour market policies. ILO, World Bank, and OECD in particular cooperate with the G20 linking employment policies to VET.

As noted earlier, the five international organisations see VET, and in particular work-based learning and apprenticeship, as a policy instrument in combatting youth unemployment in developing as well as in advanced economies. For that purpose, ILO jointly with UNESCO, the World Bank and OECD have established a digital knowledge platform on skills for employment⁹⁸. The platform has some similarities to the European Skills Panorama.

The Global public-private knowledge sharing platform on skills for employment (Global KSP)

- Global KSP aims to help strengthen the links between education and training to productive and decent work.
- The collaborative platform pools the relevant knowledge products on skills for employment of each of the partner organisations.
- The tool is designed to help users with different degrees of interest (e.g. policy

⁹⁷ Programme for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies

⁹⁸ <http://www.skillsforemployment.org/KSP/en/index.htm>

advisors, employers, training institutions, academics) find what they need - what they could put to use.

- The tool organises content by the themes of the G20 Training Strategy, which was developed by ILO and with contributions also from OECD and UNESCO. Its building blocks correspond to actual policy dilemmas, which is also searchable by region, country, economic sector, and source of information.

OECD in particular has within the framework of Learning for Jobs focused on improving the statistical knowledge about VET, whilst the data collected by UNESCO and the World Bank focus on education systems as a whole.

The World Bank and UNESCO have taken steps to develop specific tools aimed at creating a systematic approach to policy making. UNESCO has developed the so-called normative instruments. The key TVET-specific document "Main Recommendations on TVET" is currently being revised. To this end, a comprehensive on-line consultation process has taken place to get input from a wide range of stakeholders and partners from the UNESCO network.

The most recent TVET-specific normative instrument is the discussion paper "Orienting Technical and Vocational Education for Sustainable Development" from 2006. Like the other normative instruments, the paper raises some key questions central to sustainability in TVET and also provides some broad guidelines and a proposal for an action plan. In that sense UNESCO's instruments are less like toolboxes than those from World Bank and from the European Commission.

The annex⁹⁹ to this chapter includes a more detailed list of key reference documents from the five organisations including documents that have been jointly created by several of the organisations.

8.3 Strategic focus in the international cooperation in VET

All organisations see TVET/VET as part of wider lifelong learning strategies, and particularly the ILO, OECD, World Bank and UNESCO put a strong focus on the link to the world of work and on employment creation opportunities. All of the international organisations' strategies and/or work programmes are developed based on intensive consultations with their respective stakeholders. It is worth noticing that the inter-agency cooperation has intensified in recent years in matters relating to TVET for example concerning cooperation on statistics, but also on the role of apprenticeship in combatting youth unemployment.

Table 4. International organisations' strategy on (T)VET

International organisation/fora	Strategy and work programme
ASEM	The responsible ministers of the ASEM member states, representatives of the European Commission, and the ASEAN Secretariat meet every two years to define future cooperation objectives and agree on output-oriented activities
ILO	The Strategic Policy Framework 2010- 2015 is centred on the essential priorities of the Decent Work Agenda. It specifies the strategies the ILO will implement to achieve results over the biennium, alongside the capacities and the resources required delivering those results. The ILO's

⁹⁹ Annex 2 untitled Suggestions to UNESCO for action planning in TVET for sustainable development during the United Nations Decade of Education for sustainable development, available at <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0014/001480/148012e.pdf>

International organisation/fora	Strategy and work programme
	biennial programme of work is delivered in member States mainly through Decent Work Country Programmes (DWCP).
OECD	The VET agenda agreed by the Education Committee in April 2007 following an informal meeting of ministers. The Education Committee is the main policy-making body in OECD educational policy setting the strategic direction for OECD's work on education policy.
UNESCO	A Strategy for TVET was adopted in 2009 by the Executive Board The strategy focuses on action in three core areas: 1) provision of upstream policy advice and related capacity development; 2) conceptual clarification of skills development and improvement of monitoring; 3) acting as a clearinghouse and informing the global TVET debate. The strategy strongly emphasises cooperation between international organisations to ensure a holistic approach to TVET development and to further the comparative evidence including in the field of statistics
World Bank	The World Bank Education Strategy 2020, "Learning for All", explicitly refers to vocational education and training stating that technical or vocational skills for an occupation are important for success in the labour market. It provides alternative learning routes to prevent drop-out and to equip them with technical or vocational skills that promote employment and entrepreneurship. In the past 10 years there has been a drop in loans to both VET and tertiary education to meet the needs of countries with a rapid growth of the 0-14 year population, which in general are poorer countries measured in GDP.
G20	The G20 Labour and Employment ministers committed in 2012 in Guadalajara to strengthen quality apprenticeship systems, promote internships, on-the-job training, apprenticeships and professional experience, foster sharing of experience in the design and implementation of apprenticeship programmes and explore ways to identify common principles across the G20 countries by facilitating a dialogue among social partners.

Source: ICF and partners

As an example, UNESCO's strategy for 2010-2015 supports Member countries in core areas:

- provision of upstream policy advice and related capacity development;
- conceptual clarification of skills development and improvement of monitoring;
- acting as a clearinghouse and informing the global TVET debate.

With regard to **definitions**, UNESCO and the World Bank have the broadest definitions on VET, mirroring that in some developing economies informal apprenticeships are a characteristic feature of VET systems for the informal economy. As a consequence, VET in lower secondary education is also included, as are all forms of continuing and further vocational training. In activities implemented until now, the OECD has focused on upper secondary VET and post-secondary VET, but in reality has chosen to take a point of departure in countries' own definitions and terminology on VET, rather than predefined definitions. In the USA, for example, it is called CTE (Career and Technical Education and Training).

All of the organisations focus on VET providing skills for the world of work. Of the five organisations, ILO, UNESCO, OECD and the World Bank are in particular guided by a strategic focus on **bridging the utility of training to effective labour market transition**. The main difference is that UNESCO, ILO and the World Bank explicitly refer to informal apprenticeship and to the primary sectors fisheries and agriculture, apart from emerging new sectors of economic activity. ILO's work on informal apprenticeship includes country level research in several countries in Africa to understand what

motivates master craftsmen and to find ways to improve the system, one of the problems being that in countries with informal apprenticeship there tends to be a poor connection between the informal apprenticeship and the formal VET offer.¹⁰⁰

As economies become more integrated through global value chains, and sectors converge due to technological change, **skills anticipation** becomes a critical element in forward-looking labour market information and as the basis for the creation of responsive VET systems.

ILO in particular has carried out a number of studies on skills anticipation, and published several guidelines. Illustrative examples are outlined in the box below.

ILO publications on skills anticipation

- **Skills for Trade and Economic Diversification (STED). A Practical Guide** - addresses anticipation of skill needs in promoting trade strategies and in exporting industries.
- **Anticipating skill needs for green jobs: A practical guide** - addresses methods of identification of skill needs for a greener economy / sustainable development.
- **Guidelines for inclusion of skills aspects into employment-related analyses and policy formulation**. Prepared for the integration of skills analysis into NEPs-related analysis. Follows the same cycle of policy formulation and implementation as the one used in the guide on NEPs' formulation.
- **Compendium of 6 Tools on Skills Anticipation and Matching** (collaboration between ILO, ETF and Cedefop).
- **Guide on Foresights, Scenarios and Forecasts of Future Skill Needs** - addresses quantitative and qualitative identification of future skill needs at a macroeconomic level.
- **Approaches to Skills Anticipation and Matching at Sector Level** - addresses methods, processes and institutional mechanisms of skills identification and anticipation at sector level.
- **Practical Guide for Employment Service Providers in Skills Anticipation and Matching** - addresses the role of PES and PrEA in skills anticipation and matching including LMI collection and use.

There are both similarities and differences in the activities of the organisations defined by their missions. A mapping of core activities shows the following:

- **Statistics:** UNESCO, OECD, World Bank, ILO
- **Qualitative studies** to stimulate outcome-driven and evidence based activities: OECD, ASEM, World Bank, UNESCO, ILO
- **Cooperation on tools to improve quality:** UNESCO, ASEM, World Bank
- **Policy reviews:** UNESCO, OECD, ILO
- **Technical assistance:** World Bank, UNESCO, ILO
- **Seminars, publications, conferences, on-line dissemination:** UNESCO, OECD, World Bank, ASEM, ILO
- **Facilitations of networks:** ASEM, ILO, UNESCO

Through their governance set-up, all the organisations are well situated to **foster strategic policy dialogues on VET**, whilst they also in different ways build capacity

¹⁰⁰ Regional Experts' knowledge sharing workshop on upgrading informal apprenticeship. Johannesburg 2013.

through interventions, networking and clustering. ILO and UNESCO and to some degree the World Bank group support and promote international cooperation among practitioners through clustering and on-line facilitation.

Particularly UNESCO, OECD and the World Bank emphasise the importance of **improving the knowledge base about the outcomes of VET** - and more broadly on education through statistical work. In preparation of the OECD review Learning for Jobs, OECD undertook a survey of VET systems among the participating countries, and concluded based on the data quality that the inconsistencies in data on VET and the lack of data in certain areas/ countries constitutes one of the key barriers to more systematic comparative work on improving VET outcomes.

The **work on tools and benchmarks** is another way that the organisations aim to improve quality whilst also increasing comparability. UNESCO is for example currently revising its normative instruments, which are intended as soft guidelines to policy makers. The normative instruments are being revised as a consequence of changing priorities and concerns in TVET such as youth unemployment, the role of TVET in the greening of the economy and the speed of technological change, which has also highlighted the need to understand and situate TVET within a broader lifelong learning agenda.

Dialogue at stakeholder level is supported by specific programmes and research. Particularly UNESCO and the World Bank group support regionally focused activities, and they provide support to country clustering on particular topics of common interest. In the SADC region in Africa UNESCO has for example supported country networking on qualification frameworks as a means to improve cross-border labour market mobility.

OECD regularly organises expert seminars both in Paris and in Member countries, very often with participation of senior officials. In April 2014, OECD hosted a major conference on quality in apprenticeship organised jointly with the European Commission, involving the G20 countries and the ILO. In 2013 UNESCO organised a major global conference on TVET in Shanghai with attendance of Ministers of Education and senior officials from most member countries. As part of the conference a major publication on global trends in VET in developing and emerging countries was presented and discussed with a group of global experts.

The World Bank is primarily engaged through its sector boards in supporting the development of vocational skills and workforce development in different ways. However, vocational education and training has decreased in relative importance in the World Bank's lending policies in recent years.

In the next section, a number of examples illustrate the type of activities the organisations undertake.

8.4 Support to (T)VET reform: examples of practice

UNESCO is very active in publishing guiding documents, which can support both policy makers and practitioners in VET reform. The UNEVOC network plays an important role in that respect. In recent years UNESCO has increasingly focused on the notion of sustainability, and the role of TVET in that respect.

UNESCO: TVET for sustainable development

The discussion paper presents an overview of key concepts, trends and issues in the field of TVET for sustainable development. It has been prepared by the UNESCO-UNEVOC International Centre, in consultation with a number of UNEVOC Centres and partner agencies and several leading researchers, policy-makers and practitioners working in this field.

To guide developments of TVET systems the paper raises a number of questions regarding:

- The definition of sustainable development in vocational education;

- How TVET can be re-oriented to advance the transition to a more sustainable future;
- What it means in practice to curriculum development and pedagogy in different parts of the TVET system including continuing vocational training, and which requirements it poses to VET institutions and trainers.

The paper concludes with a number of guiding principles for the development of TVET for sustainable development and a proposal for an action plan.

To support the implementation of its Education Strategy 2020 “Learning for All”¹⁰¹ the World Bank launched a multi-year programme to support countries in systematically examining and strengthening the performance of their education systems as a whole.

The SABER (Systems Approach for Better Education Results) initiative is an interesting tool kit that covers different aspects of an education system. The only part of the SABER toolkit which at present is relevant to VET is the toolkit on workforce development. The workforce toolkit aims to support skills supply and demand in becoming more closely aligned in workforce development measures. Further information is outlined in the box below.

World Bank: SABER WfD – Workforce Development Tool

SABER-WfD offers a systematic approach for framing the issues and for documenting and assessing the current institutional structures and practices for WfD in the country concerned.

- **Strategy:** alignment between workforce development and given country’s goals for economic and social development;
- **System oversight:** the governance arrangements that shape the behaviours of key stakeholders including individuals, employers, and training providers;
- **Service delivery:** arrangements for managing the provision of services in order to achieve results on the ground.

Outputs:

- a framework paper outlining “what matters” in improving WfD systems and motivating the type of data to be collected;
- a diagnostic tool in the form of the data collection instrument and established protocols for data collection;
- defined rubrics for data processing and scoring;
- piloted the SABER-WfD approach in five countries (Chile, Ireland, Korea, Singapore, and Uganda), then expanded it to additional countries.

The tool’s pilot testing suggests that the three broad functional dimensions are indeed the right ones to focus on in workforce development.

8.4.1 Building capacity and improving outcomes through policy reviews

In 2007 VET was put on the OECD strategic agenda at an informal meeting of ministers held in Copenhagen. At the meeting it was strongly argued that there was a need to revisit VET systems in a systematic way due to changing patterns of competitiveness. The meeting concluded with a broad agreement on developing a stronger basis for **comparisons of VET systems**, building on what had been accomplished through the

¹⁰¹ http://siteresources.worldbank.org/EDUCATION/Resources/ESSU/EducationStrategyUpdate_April2012.pdf

OECD review of school-to-work transition. This would include systems characteristics and definition such as work-based learning or school-based VET, the articulation between VET systems and effective transitions to labour markets, and better comparable data.

Further to this event, a proposal for work along two lines was presented to the Education Committee and to the CERI¹⁰²'s governing board. A questionnaire was also circulated to countries, inviting them to set out their policy priorities for work on VET and propose case studies of innovation in VET. The proposal presented at the February meeting included an outline of two strands of work:

- One to be undertaken by OECD Education in the form of country reviews of initial VET Systems under the title of *Learning for Jobs*, and;
- The other (an exploratory case study) to be undertaken by OECD CERI on innovation in VET systems in order to understand the nature of change in VET systems.

Two major reviews have been undertaken by OECD to date in the area. The first, *Learning for Jobs* has been completed, and the second, *Learning Beyond School*, is still running. The OECD CERI initiative on systemic innovation processes in VET was completed in 2008, and was published in 2009 under the title "Systemic Innovation Processes in VET, working out change". One particular interesting feature of this initiative was the development of an analytical model including the key components and features, which based on the country reviews seem to be characteristic of successful educational innovations whether top down or bottom-up driven.

OECD: Policy review – Learning for jobs

The OECD review *Learning for Jobs*¹⁰³ focused on initial VET systems and covers 17 countries. For each country a brief review report was written by the review team, typically consisting of one OECD and two external experts. The country reports built on a similar structure with key findings and recommendations in the beginning, followed by a system analysis and system data in an annex.

As part of the Learning for Jobs initiative a survey was conducted among the participating countries to begin to improve data collection and data comparability on VET systems.

The final synthesis report was published in 2010.

Key policy pointers emerging from the study were published under the following headings:

- Mix of skills for the labour market;
- Reform of career guidance systems;
- Teachers and trainers with industry experience;
- Make full use of work place learning;
- Tools and methods to engage stakeholders.

In 2012, the G20 Labour and Employment Ministers called for sharing of experience in the design and implementation of apprenticeship programs in the context of a global challenge with youth unemployment. The ILO and the World Bank then jointly conducted

¹⁰² Centre for Educational Research and Innovation, <http://www.oecd.org/edu/ceri/>

¹⁰³ Final Report: OECD (2010): "Learning for Jobs"

a study to review international experience in apprenticeships and identify good practice principles based on the cross-country analysis of 11 country practices.

ILO Review of Apprenticeship systems

In 2012, the G20 Labour and Employment Ministers called for sharing of experience in the design and implementation of apprenticeship programs in the context of a global challenge with youth unemployment.

In 2012 ILO and the World Bank jointly conducted a study to review international experience in apprenticeships and identify good practice principles based on the cross-country analysis of 11 country practices

Outcomes: A final report and a framework for a model apprenticeship system, "Towards a model apprenticeship framework. A comparative analysis of national apprenticeship systems." ILO 2013.

Countries covered: Australia, Canada, Egypt, England, France, Germany, India, Indonesia, South Africa, Turkey and the United States.

Besides the proposed model for an apprenticeship framework, the report offer a comparative analysis based on the information supplied in 11 case studies targeting the countries listed above. This analysis builds on eight main sections which offers insights on:

- **Nature of apprenticeship systems** (e.g. pathways into apprenticeships; participation by individuals; attractiveness to applicants)
- **Practical arrangements** (e.g. employment status; training provider; length of training contract; types of legislation and administrative frameworks; qualifications; social partners and their roles; completion/retention rates)
- **Funding regimes** (e.g. typology of employment status of apprenticeships)
- **Occupational coverage** (e.g. range of occupations covered; licensing and ability to practice ; adding new occupations)
- **Nature and quality of curriculum**
- **The employer** (e.g. level of participation of enterprises; supervision rations; incentives; responsibilities of the employer)
- **The apprenticeship lifecycle** (e.g. recruitment, selection, induction and contracting arrangements; training and assessment, support; completion and beyond)
- **Key issues identified by country experts**

At UNESCO level, with the launch of the current strategy period, the organisation began to offer high level policy advice targeting developing and emerging economies. The TVET Policy Review is not an attempt to provide ready-made policy recommendations but should be rather regarded as a part of **on-going policy dialogue** among various stakeholders. In several cases, this is followed-up by country clustering seminars and local seminars, including cooperation with donor agencies to follow up on action plans.

As of the beginning of 2014, eight policy reviews have been conducted in Africa and in South East Asia, and more requests are pending. The policy reviews are typically prepared and organised in collaboration with the regional UNESCO centres¹⁰⁴. Following the third TVET event in May 2012¹⁰⁵, UNESCO has seen a growing demand for this form of support. Compared to the OECD policy review framework, the UNESCO methodology

¹⁰⁴ When the reviews started, Danish Technological Institute was contracted to develop the review methodology and to pilot it in the SADC region in Africa.

¹⁰⁵ Shanghai international conference on TVET. <http://www.unesco.org/new/en/education/themes/education-building-blocks/technical-vocational-education-and-training-tvet/third-international-congress-on-tvet/>

focuses more on the economic context of the country and the characteristics of the labour markets including the informal labour market. TVET is defined broadly to include provision also within the context of informal apprenticeships and by providers and NGOs.

A particular innovative feature was developed for the **UNESCO review tool box**. It consists of a methodology for a follow-up seminar involving all key stakeholders. At that seminar key findings are validated, and stakeholders work together to develop action plans and timelines with indicators of success, and budgets required in a number of prioritised areas central to the development of the TVET system in the specific country.

The text box below gives an example of the structure of one of the country reports published as part of UNESCO's action on high level policy advice in TVET. The first review conducted was in Malawi in Africa. The reviews are generally organised with one UNESCO expert from the regional UNESCO office, at times also an expert from central office in Paris - and two or three external experts.

Example of an UNESCO TVET Policy review: Cambodia

UNESCO's Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) system policy review¹⁰⁶ for Cambodia responds to an invitation from the Government of Cambodia to UNESCO to conduct a review of the country's TVET system and to engage in a policy dialogue on its future development.

The report is structured as follows:

- Part 1 provides a summary of key information about Cambodia's population, economy and labour market system. The report begins with an analysis of the Cambodian socio-economic development model and the imperatives that arise for TVET. It then provides focus on TVET policy development.
- Parts 2 and 3 discuss the Cambodian education and TVET systems. Key aspects of the country's TVET system are analysed such as its policy framework, governance and management, financing mechanisms, curricula, pedagogy, quality, relevance and impact.
- Part 4 examines TVET links with the labour market such as employment and career guidance services, labour market information systems, public-private partnerships and workplace learning.
- Part 5 discusses Cambodia's plans to develop TVET, and draws on international perspectives inform the national debate and support evidence-based policy making.
- Part 6 draws conclusions from earlier discussions and provides specific policy recommendations where relevant. This section also highlights some areas where further policy discussion may be fruitful.

Other means to building capacity include the **15 sector boards¹⁰⁷ of the World Bank**. The distribution of projects and funds of the World Bank between 2006 and 2010 by sector shows that the agriculture and rural development sector had the highest number of approved projects in the field of skills development and training. In most regions, skills

¹⁰⁶ <http://www.unescobkk.org/education/tvet/tvet-policy-review/>

¹⁰⁷ A sector board is the governing body of a sector, constituted by the managers of the regional sector management units and the sector anchor, as well as representatives of other relevant vice presidencies; the sector board is chaired by the director of the relevant sector anchor and is responsible for the sector strategy, quality including knowledge, learning and operational quality, and human resources management of sector staff including staff recruitment, mentoring, deployment, and promotion (IEG 2012 p. xiii).

development and training represented at least 10% of each region's portfolio of approved projects, in South Asia more than 20%.

In a nutshell, the main aims of the World Bank intervention in skills development are to strengthen:

- The public sector's capacity to design, execute, monitor and evaluate programs and policies while a smaller number of programs sought to enhance capacity of public and;
- Private enterprises to develop, adapt and commercialise new technologies.

Examples of World Bank's actions to foster local capacity

- On-the-job training sessions targeting government staff, private-sector employees, and NGO and SME staff;
- less commonly by skill development programs offered at local universities or through online modules, seminars, workshops and study tour;
- investments in training generally to support and/or complement national workforce development initiatives, despite the lack of advanced skill development programs.

Types of cooperation activities include:

- Cooperation with national and regional authorities;
- Project cooperation consisting of funding, facilitating, monitoring and evaluation of projects;
- Commissioning and/or coordinating studies to collect and analyse data on VET;
- Financial, advisory and technical services to help countries to identify priorities and reach development goals.

8.4.2 Improving the knowledge base

The number of recent international initiatives and conferences held on apprenticeship illustrate how VET has emerged to the top of the policy agenda over the last years. From the outset there has been a broad recognition among the international organisations that there is a lack of comparable data on VET, and the policy lessons emerging from different VET initiatives are not based on systematic impact evaluations. When OECD started the "Learning for Jobs" a survey was sent out to collect comparable baseline information on VET systems¹⁰⁸. In 2010 UNESCO-UNEVOC hosted the first meeting of the Inter-Agency Working Group on TVET Indicators. The Working Group is a sub-group of the Inter-Agency Working Group on TVET, which includes representatives of the Asian Development Bank (ADB), the European Training Foundation (ETF), the International Labour Organization (ILO), the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), UNESCO and the World Bank (WB). The group seeks to establish a **set of TVET indicators related to policy development** with an aim to **improving TVET management**.

Another way to improve the knowledge base about TVET as a policy instrument for example relating to youth unemployment is through research and rigorous evaluations. The World Bank has over time carried out numerous comparative studies on the outcomes of policy interventions to alleviate a particular challenge. One example is the Youth Employment Inventory.

¹⁰⁸ Kuzera, Malgortzata. Learning for Jobs. The OECD international Survey of VET Systems: first results and Technical report

World Bank Youth Employment Inventory

The *Youth Employment Inventory*¹⁰⁹ has been compiled to improve the evidence base for making decisions about how to address the problem of youth employment. To respond to this situation, the World Bank has compiled a world-wide inventory of the interventions that are designed to integrate young people into the labour market. This Youth Employment Inventory (YEI) is based on available documentation of current and past programmes and in 2007 included evidence from 289 studies of interventions from 84 countries in all regions of the world, which give examples on the links between VET and labour market government programmes, social partners' initiatives and projects. . The interventions included in the YEI have been analysed in order to:

- document the types of programmes that have been implemented to support young workers to find work; and
- identify what appears to work in terms of improving employment outcomes for youth

The YEI does not include new project information, but is based exclusively on existing documentation gathered from a wide range of published and electronic sources.

Overall evidence of impact is weak. Only one in 10 programmes included in the inventory has an evaluation which measures both net impact and costs.

The main aim of the World Bank intervention in skills development is to strengthen the public sector's capacity to design, execute, monitor and evaluate programs and policies, while a smaller number of programmes sought to enhance capacity of public and private enterprises to develop, adapt and commercialise new technologies. To support that the World Bank has created a strong monitoring and accountability framework, and it commissions studies on issues relating to VET as the basis for improving interventions.

The organisation has for example carried out analyses on the role of VET in lower secondary education in developing economies. Based on the analysis it concludes that no tracer studies have shown that vocational programmes implemented on a large scale in developing countries confer any advantage in access to employment (let alone self-employment) under conditions of highly depressed labour markets for youth.¹¹⁰

Though the prioritisation of VET has **diminished the World Banks' lending policies**, the Bank has supported projects which specifically focus on VET, one of these in India. The project started in 2007 with an end date of November 2014:

Vocational Training Improvement Project India, 2007-2014

The objective of the project is to improve the employment outcomes of graduates from the vocational training system by making the design and delivery of training more demand responsive.

There are 3 components:

- Component 1: Improving Quality of Vocational Training. This focuses on: (a) improving quality and relevance of training provided in 400 eligible Industrial Training Institutes selected competitively from eligible States/Union Territories,

¹⁰⁹ <http://www.youth-employment-inventory.org/>

¹¹⁰ Lauglo Jon (2004) Vocationalized Secondary Education Revisited. World Bank.

(b) upgrading training of ITI instructors, and (c) providing incentive funds to States to reward good performance in project implementation.

- Component 2: Promoting Systemic Reforms and Innovations. This focuses on activities that lead to enhancement in the overall reach and effectiveness of the vocational training system in the medium-term.
- Component 3: Project Management, Monitoring and Evaluation. This provides support for: (a) establishment of project management and implementation structures at the national and state levels, (b) improvements in system management and implementation of reforms through training of policy planners, managers and administrators, (c) project monitoring and dissemination of information with the help of a computer-based management information system, and (d) project evaluation and, policy and system research studies at the national and state levels.

Total project costs are USD 280 million including funding from other sources than the Bank.

In addition to the above, the World Bank also uses **different instruments to strengthen local capacity**. It involves on-the-job training sessions targeting both public and private stakeholders as well as participants from the third sector. Investments in training generally to support and/or complement national workforce development initiatives embedded in broader country reform measures.

Apart from funding, World Bank provides support to countries in the form commissioning and or coordinating **studies to collect and analyse VET data**. In that context, the organisation emphasises the need to conduct rigorous socio-economic analyses to support implementation, a measure which has proven to be a weak point in local development capacity building projects. A second measure, which has proven critical to a sustainable implementation model are facilitation of broad stakeholder involvement - particularly the private sector - and sound economic analysis prior to implementation.

An internal evaluation conducted by the World Bank in 2002 showed that an economic impact analysis as part of the project implementation framework was often missing. This would include questions of medium-term skill needs and the impact of training reform on labour market efficiency, and an analysis of the wider economy as a whole.

Finally, there has been a growing focus on the necessity to ensure a coherent coordination framework and good coordination practices between agencies involved in the administration of VET as well as between Ministries and project implementation units as a pre-condition to high-impact projects. The support to coordination will often touch upon broader governance issues and greater autonomy to the training providers.

8.4.3 Engaging with stakeholders

Vocational education often holds a lower parity of esteem as higher education. Engaging the international stakeholder communities in a broader dialogue about VET, and in light of the characteristics of high quality VET systems are, is an important role for these international organisations. As mentioned earlier, the focus on VET in the **ASEM community** is a relatively new phenomenon. One of the actions that ASEM has undertaken was the organisation of a Symposium in China in 2011 on TVET. Further information is outlined in the box below.

ASEM Technical and Vocational Education Symposium in Qingdao, China

In January 2011, China hosted the first ASEM Technical and Vocational Education Symposium in Qingdao, China. The theme was "How to Improve the Attractiveness and Employability of TVET in the Current Global Economic Situation". 220 delegates from EU and Asian countries and the ASEM Education Secretariat discussed their national strategies, national policies and national systems to enhance TVET reform and development, and shared their experiences

At the symposium it was agreed to implement measures to put TVET into a more important position, notably to support the country's economic development and to increase the attractiveness of TVET. To do so it was decided:

- To continue dialogue and cooperation on curriculum reform, standards and quality assurance, personnel exchange, research and lifelong learning, etc. among members at national, industrial and TVET institutional levels are to be developed.

In view of the above, the symposium recommended that:

- The ASEM TVET Symposium be made a regular event in order to establish and enhance an international TVET policy dialogue mechanism;
- An expert group be established in order to elaborate the development of joint TVET initiatives;
- good practices be shared between Asia and Europe on cooperation models between multinational enterprises and local vocational schools;
- Asian and European member countries should be encouraged to conduct bilateral and multilateral TVET technical assistant programmes.
- Asian and European member countries be supported to cooperate in areas such as curriculum and teacher professional development, quality assurance, recognition of prior-learning experience and learning methods, and;
- Good practices be documented particularly those reflecting industry-school partnerships which can be shared by all participating countries.

In May 2012, UNESCO held its third international conference on TVET in Shanghai, China. The Third **International Congress on Technical and Vocational Education and Training** (TVET) emphasised that there is no one-size-fits-all recipe for TVET to address current challenges. The conference was organised through the lens of sustainable economic development and equity and transformative change, and it had speakers from all over the world.

One of its important outcomes was the production of a set of key recommendations to governments and other TVET stakeholders in UNESCO Member States, presented under seven strands (known as the Shanghai Consensus, UNESCO 2012):

- Enhance the relevance of TVET
- Expand access and improve quality and equity
- Adapt qualifications and develop pathways
- Improve the evidence base
- Strengthen governance and expand partnerships
- Increase investment in TVET and diversify financing
- Advocate for TVET

A world report on TVET prepared for UNESCO by consultants was previewed during the Shanghai Conference, but has not yet been published.

8.4.4 VET and youth unemployment - inter-organisational cooperation

In April 2014, OECD co-organised together with the European Commission, involving the G20 and ILO, a conference on '**Quality Apprenticeships for Giving Youth a Better Start in the Labour Market**'.¹¹¹ The aim of the conference was to draw on the work of the G20 Task Force for Employment and by the European Commission, OECD and ILO, as

¹¹¹ www.oecd.org/.../G20-OECD-EC%20Apprenticeship%20Conference_Issues

the basis for mutual sharing of good practice in fostering the better insertion of youth into the labour market through the development of quality apprenticeships. A second key objective was to foster a greater commitment by all stakeholders to take action to introduce or strengthen apprenticeship initiatives. The key question that the conference focused on was whether stronger apprenticeships systems help improve job prospects for youth.

8.4.5 Cooperation on Tools

The **ASEM** symposium in China was followed-up by a seminar in Berlin to exchange information on the state of development in ASEM member states of National Qualifications Frameworks (NQFs), as these are key tools to translate levels and qualifications between systems, improve comparability of content and use of qualifications for the final users (labour market, companies and professionals), and in turn support mobility across regions.

In 2010, the **World Bank** organised a similar seminar on national qualification frameworks within the action on Knowledge Economies in Istanbul in Turkey. A number of the presentations focused specifically on the issue of permeability between VET and higher education as a key to raising the status and attractiveness of TVET. That seminar built substantially on the comparative research and development undertaken by the OECD on national qualification frameworks and their role in the creation of coherent lifelong learning policies.

UNESCO – qualifications frameworks

UNESCO has initiated activities on qualification frameworks to stimulate trans-border mobility - mainly focusing on the portability of TVET skills. Together with selected regional UNEVOC centres in South East Asia, in the SADC¹¹² region in Africa, and in Latin America, stakeholders are meeting to find common grounds and design a joint process which is inclusive and can contribute to the post-2015 agenda and to a broader TVET agenda of economic development through portability of skills at the regional level.

The work involves:

- defining learning descriptors and qualifications, and;
- ascertaining which quality criteria are important in the process of recognition of qualifications - including informal and non-formal learning.

Qualification frameworks are a means to improve the transparency of qualifications. ASEM, UNESCO and ILO have organised events regionally on qualification frameworks, viewing them as an instruments in improving the functioning of regional labour market through cross-border mobility.

ILO - UNESCO - UNEVOC Regional Seminar on Qualification Frameworks

In 2009, ILO and UNESCO-UNEVOC jointly organised a regional seminar entitled Harnessing Regional Qualifications Framework to Integrate Quality Assurance in TVET.

The aims were:

- to examine the issues and challenges in developing Qualifications Frameworks in the national, regional, and global contexts;
- to present tested models, conceptual frameworks and showcase different case studies/research papers with respect to developing qualifications framework,

¹¹² i.e. Southern African Development Community.

and;

- to exchange experiences and innovative practices in the development and implementation of National Qualifications Frameworks and Quality Assurance in TVET sectors in Colombo Plan countries.

8.4.6 Other means of engaging with stakeholders

Apart from conferences, seminars, networks, and publications and guidelines, which all of the organisations are using as means of engaging with stakeholders, **UNESCO's UNEVOC centre** facilitates a particular interesting example with a broad and interactive outreach.

The UNEVOC centre plays a central role in disseminating information and sharing practices on TVET development through its digital platform, which provides access to a bulletin and an e-library of promising practices, and a database on TVET systems world-wide. In addition it facilitates the e-forum, which is an on-line debate forum between global TVET experts.

In the e-Forum, participants have the opportunity to:

- discuss relevant issues for TVET policy-makers, researchers and practitioners;
- announce international conferences and workshops;
- inform colleagues on publications and other resources;
- inquire for materials that would be useful for their work, and that may be available abroad, e.g. curriculum materials, samples of legal texts, etc.;
- find partners for international cooperation in research and development.

The e-Forum has a very active and broad participation, which seems to really meet a demand in particular from practitioners.

The Inter-American Centre for Knowledge Development in Vocational Training (CINTERFOR), a technical unit of ILO, is another interesting example of how cooperation between practitioners can be enabled through the capacity and ways of creating outreach at scale:

CINTERFOR- Network of TVET institutions

The Inter-American Centre for Knowledge Development in Vocational Training ([CINTERFOR](#)) is a technical unit of ILO based in Montevideo, Uruguay. Coordinating the largest network of TVET institutions in the world comprising more than 65 institutions in Latin America, the Caribbean, Spain and Africa, CINTERFOR promotes knowledge sharing and south-south cooperation activities for skill development.

CINTERFOR also focuses on issues related to the environment and green jobs. For example, the Brazilian National [Service of Industrial Learning \(SENAI\)](#), one of the partnering members of CINTERFOR, has defined environmental considerations as a cross-cutting competency in professional education.

9 Conclusions

This section outlines the key conclusions of the study report based on the findings set out in earlier sections. It starts summarising the key findings from the review of the EU/EFTA Member States' policies and practices and the international organisations covered. It then sheds the light on existing capabilities and strengths at European Commission's (EC) level in the field of VET which could be further considered for supporting future developments at EU level in the field of international cooperation in VET.

9.1 State of play in international cooperation in VET

This mapping study firstly helps confirm that there is already activity in the area of international cooperation in VET. Both at national and international level, actions and measures exist. At national level, while only a small number of countries (including Germany, Denmark and the Netherlands among EU Member States) have consolidated their activities in this area into a clear strategy, quite a few others (e.g. France, the UK, Austria, several Nordic countries, etc.) are also engaged in international cooperation in VET.

9.1.1 Key findings at EU/EFTA Member States level

Engaging in international cooperation is primarily driven by globalisation and its consequences. This type of cooperation (where effectively put in place) is often seen as a means to address one or several of the following objectives (non-exhaustive):

- To promote the positioning and recognition of national VET systems abroad - and generate revenues at VET provider level;
- To address skills mismatches/strengthen the supply of a skilled and globally-aware labour force at country level;
- To modernise national VET systems;
- To coordinate grassroots activities that mushroomed in the past.

Overall, countries' reasons for engaging in international cooperation in VET are twofold:

- **Outward:** the EU/EFTA country wants to ensure that the third country has a VET system and VET providers that are able to deliver the skills needed for activities of companies that originate from this country. It also wants to ensure that third countries have a positive image of its VET system as this can lead to other positive effects (perception of quality of products and services) or the demand for training as a commercial activity; and
- **Inward:** the EU/EFTA country also wants to enhance the openness of its VET system. International cooperation in VET is also a way to ensure that home VET providers are encouraged to innovate their own practices. It is also a means to strengthen young persons' international outlook (beyond the EU borders).

The understanding of the concept of international cooperation in VET may greatly vary though from one country to another - being for instance briefly referred to in national legislation or policy documents without specifying what is behind 'international cooperation in VET' or assimilating this to intra-EU cooperation.

At policy level, the review of the information collected reveals that there is usually a clear **link between the rationale for international cooperation in VET and countries' economic, industrial and/or diplomatic policies**. Findings (see 4.1 for details) suggest that countries which have already strongly developed international cooperation with third countries are more likely to engage in internationalisation of VET than others. This is particularly found in countries where national industries operating abroad devote a substantial scope and volume of their operations in third countries (e.g. FR, UK, DE, NL, IT, NO) or in line with their diplomatic policies in regions of strategic or historical importance (e.g. France-Maghreb, UK-India, Poland-Russia, etc.). The in-depth analysis of given initiatives undertaken at national level (see individual case studies in Annex 3 for details) further confirms this trend.

A clear correlation between having a **strategic framework** at policy level, clearly focused on the topic, and the actual **scale of cooperation arrangements** is also found. On the other side of the coin, many of the countries that have no specific framework or a marginal set of actions usually fall under the category 'not having any significant cooperation activities'.

It is nevertheless important to note that the absence of priority given to the topic at policy level does not mean that VET-related cooperation activities are not strategic. Overall, if the rationale for a given action is not a strategic policy interest¹¹³, then there is in general a **specific demand** from a small number of **economic players** (typically companies). This observation clearly emerged from the review of the initiatives identified in the different country fiches produced to inform the study.

Looking at non-EU countries, the example of Australia shows that international cooperation in VET can be a strategic component of countries' external relations agenda but also a source of revenue for training providers who engage in training abroad. The information collected suggests that this is being increasingly acknowledged, particularly among most active EU/AFTA countries in the area.

An important aspect with regard to strategic approaches is that the **landscape in which international cooperation in VET operates is rather fragmented**: diversity of VET systems/models within EU/EFTA countries as well as across third countries; a large number of small and medium scale initiatives of different nature are usually found across individual EU/EFTA Member States whilst competition for providing training worldwide is growing with the involvement of third countries in the area (e.g. Japan, Singapore, etc.) or the emergence of new types of providers (e.g. multi-nationals) or provision (e.g. e-learning).

Different stakeholders (ranging from strategy-level actors to VET institutions or companies) are usually involved, to different extent, in different ways and often act in isolation.

As a result, fragmentation and lack of coordinated actions/bodies are thus important constraints as they often lead to duplication of efforts on the ground, lack of visibility of who is doing what in the sector and the difficulty for grassroots organisations (VET providers) or for companies to understand existing activities.

Another finding is that while VET is on the agenda of international cooperation, it is **not yet perceived as a priority** compared to, for example, higher education. However, the fact that the cooperation activities attract less attention and smaller investments does not mean that they are not strategic. On contrary, those countries that have developed strategies in this area can be seen as forerunners.

At practice level, various types of cooperation activities (clustered in four main categories – see details in section 6) are encountered in the area. The most commonly-pursued types of cooperation include:

- Outbound and inbound student mobility programmes, including financial schemes to support student mobility programme;
- Policy dialogue at strategic level;
- Creation of VET institutions abroad;
- Bilateral cooperation between VET institutions leading to VET delivery and capacity-building.

According to the information collected the most commonly targeted third countries comprise China, India, Turkey, Mexico, Russia (among emerging countries) and USA, Canada, Japan, Australia and New Zealand (among industrialised ones).

Cooperation with third countries covers manufacturing/ industrial but also services sectors. The most commonly targeted sectors include construction, tourism/catering, automotive industry and information and communication technologies (ICT). These are generally determined by the types of industries and services which are currently exported (car, construction) or which have an international dimension (tourism, transport, ports) or for which some of the production or maintenance is outsourced abroad (IT).

Overall, the respective purposes and means deployed by these activities are tailored according to individual countries' or VET providers' needs and strategies and led by different types of actors, which makes it difficult to get comprehensive and comparable data (including on their impact and potential replicability to other national contexts)

Another key finding on cooperation activities is that few actors are informed or aware of activities conducted or supervised by other ministries or bodies. In countries where the VET system assigns strong autonomy to regional authorities (for example, in Italy or Spain) difficulties in the coordination of activities at national level are observed. This is explained with existing differences in the implementation of VET at regional level. A few exceptions and potentially inspiring practices (e.g. the German Office for International Cooperation in Vocational Education and Training) exist though.

Against this background, some **common limiting factors** to effective international cooperation in VET can be identified:

- Lack of a common definition/understanding of international cooperation in VET;
- Lack of clear support at policy level and coordinated actions on the ground;
- Financial constraints;
- Time constraints (establishing partnership with third countries may be much time-consuming in line with lack of knowledge of targeted countries' socio-economic, and educational context, local needs and capacities; administrative/legal burdens, etc.);
- Lack of data and evidence-based research on the topic at international level - whilst growing competition is taking place worldwide in the area.

Conversely, most **commonly identified success factors** include:

- Having wider outreach strategies in place – supporting a clear policy agenda and also embedding initiatives or establishing coordinated actions/bodies;
- Existing mechanisms to support an equal level of commitment on both sides of the partnerships and effective networking and monitoring actions;
- Gaining trust from VET providers (institutions and companies) but also from beneficiaries – they must be convinced of the value of the initiative they support in case this is led by strategy-level actors;
- Allocating appropriate financial resources in the area.

The Figure below offers an overview (non-exhaustive) of the above articulated around the four main objectives identified for engaging in international cooperation in VET and their respective drivers, lead actors, types of activities and limiting factors.

Figure 8. Motivations, inputs and limiting factors to international cooperation in VET

1: Promote the positioning and recognition of EU Member States VET systems, qualifications and certificates



2: Strengthen the supply of a skilled and globally-aware labour force



3: Modernise EU MS VET systems



4: Coordinate grassroots activities



Source: ICF

9.1.2 Key findings from the international organisations level

International organisations (section 8) have a different positioning in this arena than individual countries. A main difference is that they do not defend a country's specific interest but instead are aiming to improve **VET worldwide**. This is expected to contribute to growth and employment and benefit not only the specific countries but also the globalised interactions between them. At the same time they can act as a more neutral interlocutor to the third countries, not pushing for a specific model but providing knowledge and advice on a variety of models. In spite of differences in their missions and stakeholders, all nevertheless agree on:

- the need to bridge VET with effective labour market transition to address unemployment and skills mismatches and;
- the benefits of bilateral and multilateral cooperation to improve the evidence base about what works in VET worldwide.

Their similarities in actions inevitably raise the question of efficiencies, scale and risk of duplications of efforts. There are some interesting examples of cooperation among them (and/or with the EU), for example:

- the Inter-Agency Working Group on **TVET indicators** (between UNESCO, OECD, and ILO, the World Bank and ETF and other organisations);
- the Inter-Agency Working Group on **Greening TVET and Skills Development** (bringing together OECD, ILO, UNITAR, ETF and Cedefop);
- the **Public-Private Knowledge Sharing Platform Skills for Employment** (Global KSP platform) which involves the World Bank, UNESCO, ILO and G20.

Their respective fields of expertise and potential complementarities could be (possibly also with the EU) well placed to monitor the impact of globalisation of VET (including the impact of new technologies/Open Education Resources (OER) and whether that will lead to new players as seen in higher education for instance). The mandate of each of these organisations analysed is clear. Yet in several areas of intervention there seem to be overlaps in activities, and resources that could have been spent better through closer cooperation.

Besides obvious axes/thematic areas where the EU should further collaborate with these organisations (e.g. sub-groups of the Inter-Agency Working Group), there is scope for strengthening cooperation in thematic areas in which both the EU and these organisations have expertise. Thematic areas where the EU has gained significant experience and where it could contribute e.g. include: apprenticeship, quality of VET and policy review methodologies for VET systems.

In the field of apprenticeship, the **European Commission** could further strengthen its role in a global perspective. The ongoing stock-taking exercise on apprenticeship (first two pilot reviews headed by **Cedefop**¹¹⁴ will soon be completed) could be linked to the **European Alliance for apprenticeship** and the **VET Business Forum**. The ILO conducted in 2013 in collaboration with the International Employers Organization a feasibility study to explore options for developing a global business network on apprenticeships for youth employment¹¹⁵. The first steps to establish the Global Apprenticeship Network (GAN) have been taken.

The EU has already taken some steps in this area as well through the set-up of the Alliance for apprenticeship. The advantage of a global network is not only a matter of

¹¹⁴ This ongoing activity is expected to be finalised by Spring 2015.

¹¹⁵ Feasibility study for a global business network on apprenticeship available on:
http://www.skillsforemployment.org/wcmstest4/groups/skills/documents/skpcontent/ddrf/mdgw/~edisp/wcmstest4_080445.pdf

pooling resources. This would improve our global understanding of how VET systems can contribute to improving transition to labour markets in the most cost effective ways. This could also contribute to improving a comparative knowledge base about the governance and successful implementation of VET reforms.

Quality of VET is another key thematic area where the EU could possibly intervene. As economies get more inter-connected, it is not only multi-national corporations that have an interest in the quality of VET systems in other countries. Increasingly, also medium sized and small firms internationalise and specialise, and as such they increasingly depend upon their suppliers and the quality of their products and services, which is closely linked to the quality of the human workforce, and sourcing decisions are strongly associated not only with the costs, but also with the quality of the labour force.

The European Commission (with e.g. the EQAVET and quality of VET-related studies) and ILO which have both undertaken actions in this area could for instance further analyse the impact of globalising labour markets on the nature of skills formation and skills demands for the mid-skilled workforce (e.g. relating to developments in global value chains, a debate which has so far mainly focused on the high skilled¹¹⁶).

Another area of possible cooperation could regard **policy review methodologies for VET systems**. This could include cooperation on methodological approaches adopted, advantages and minuses to different approaches. A point in particular concerns how a review should be designed as a means to support system development. In this area, the solid methodological experience and instrumental-oriented policy approach of the **ETF** could be of particular interest. There is also a need for meta-studies on how countries have followed-up and used outcomes of policy reviews and analyses in improving/reforming their VET systems. This could be done in the context of the EU Education and Training (E&T) Framework and the Employment Agenda as well as through initiatives (e.g. E&T stocktaking, Bruges Review, European Semester, European Alliance for Apprenticeship etc.) and linked to international cooperation in related fields and similar formats.

Some inter-organisation initiatives have already been taken regarding the role of apprenticeship in combatting youth unemployment. The **European Commission** could follow up on this work in order to analyse in more depth and based on international experience, which type of initiatives seem to have yielded the most cost effective results- and under which circumstances. Activities carried out within the Council for Employment under the World Economic Forum (WEF) show that there is immense interest from advanced as well as emerging economies, but that the evidence base about what works is limited.

Against this background, possible areas of intensified collaboration between the EU and the international organisations listed above could include:

- Improving statistics and indicators on VET at a global scale;
- Reviewing methodologies and tools for policy reviews;
- Further exploring the role of VET in combatting youth unemployment - what works, under which circumstances;
- Conduction or commissioning empirically based tools, and tool boxes to improve outcomes of VET and strengthen the evidence base on what works.

As a concluding part to this section, the conclusion drawn from the analysis of the information collected at national and international organisations level have been assembled in the table below which brings together the main strengths, weaknesses, threats and opportunities for internationalisation of VET in the EU (see Table 5).

¹¹⁶ See for example Brown Phillip, Lauder Hugh, Ashton David (2012) *Global Auction of Skills, Broken promises of Education, Jobs and Incomes*, Oxford University press.

Table 5. SWOT analysis

Strengths	Weaknesses
• Existence of a relatively wide range of actions in this area across over a half of the EU countries • Some countries have clear strategies • Often a strong relationship with economic players and linkages with economic strategies • A broad range of partner countries • Strong interest from the side of third countries to learn about VET systems of some EU countries • Positive image of 'European' VET. VET models of several EU countries are seen as champions abroad • Existence of public budget lines in the sector in a few countries added to privately-led or combined public-private actions • A few EU/EFTA countries are active players in international cooperation in VET and conduct successful practices that help: - promote their VET systems, qualifications and certificates - gain skilled labour force at home/for home companies operating abroad. - national VET systems integrate international technological and knowledge innovations and address target countries' needs • All 5 international organisations acknowledge the benefits of international cooperation in VET on work and employment creation.	• Only a small number of countries have succeeded in coordinating their actions in this area, often due to lack of willingness or interest • There is a non-negligible number of EU countries where cooperation in this area is marginal or inexistent • Heterogeneous needs across targeted countries (i.e. developed, emerging or developing countries) and need for providers to tailor strategic goals • Many actions remain relatively small scale and are hard to grow to a critical size. There are very few if any champion programmes that have reached substantial scale and that could be showcased to inspire other practices • Diversity of actions that are not clearly communicated and which are hard to understand from the perspective of all players involved – from strategic bodies in third countries to individual VET providers and companies • Lack of even basic monitoring data and evaluation evidence • Financial constraints • Lack of persons who have the skills and interest to engage in internationalisation of VET at grassroots level (not just the technical skills).

Opportunities	Threats
• Internationalisation of VET is still an emerging topic and there is scope for the EU to take a leading role. In particular given the richness of experience the EU already has in developing cooperation programmes in education and training • Increased demands for skilled workers across developed, emerging and developing economies (driven by globalisation, demographic and economic pressures, new technologies) • Third countries also face the pressure to reform VET due to growing youth unemployment • EU countries increasingly recognise the need for VET graduates to have an international outlook • There is scope for innovation of cooperation arrangements beyond the more traditional ones such as mobility or capacity building • Increased need for new types of skills (e.g. ICT, entrepreneurship, green skills, etc.) which can be brought by VET • The EU already has structured cooperation in VET with international organisations and VET is also part of policy dialogue with some countries.	• Increasing competition: competition from new types of providers (e.g. multi-national companies that operate across the world; emerging suppliers (Japan, Malaysia, Singapore, etc.)) and new ways of delivering education internationally (e.g. e-learning) both within and among countries • The fact that VET is seen as second-best option for people in many countries (be it in the EU or in the third countries). Those countries that are successfully engaging in internationalisation of VET are the ones that have a positive image of VET • Risk of going towards promoting/standardising a restricted number of 'dominant' models of VET across the world • Competition for public support with the theme of internationalisation in higher education • Some types of activities face recruitment difficulties as they require high level of engagement.

Source: ICF

9.2 Existing capacities, expertise and instruments at EU/EC level

The ultimate purpose of this study was to identify whether, where and how the EU could support actions in international cooperation in VET in the future. As noted in the introductory part, DG EAC/DG EMPL¹¹⁷ have commissioned this study at a time when priority objectives have been set at the EU level in the area, e.g. through the Bruges Communiqué but also indirectly in the remit of the Torino Process¹¹⁸, policy dialogue platforms¹¹⁹ or bilateral consultations/agreements with targeted third countries¹²⁰, and legislation (i.e. article 166 (3) of the Lisbon Treaty). While no specific EU initiatives have taken form at the EU level, there are relevant experience/expertise and instruments that could contribute to actions for international cooperation. These are briefly outlined below.

Besides legislation and policy processes, the European Commission has put in place different instruments and actions that may be of use for further supporting international cooperation in VET. These (not exhaustive) comprise:

- Working groups and policy fora (e.g. ET 2020 Working Group on VET, VET-Business Forum, etc.)
- Targeted initiatives in the field of VET including settings for engaging with stakeholders (e.g. the European Alliances for Apprenticeships) and dissemination tools (e.g. the EU Skills Panorama).

This rich experience is furthermore complemented with relevant knowledge and expertise from the EU agencies (ETF and Cedefop).

Among the working groups and policy fora, the **ET 2020 Working Group on VET** (WG on VET) set up in the framework of the Open Method of Coordination (OMC) is aimed to support effective implementation of national VET reforms that provide for or strengthen work-based learning (WBL) and apprenticeship type schemes for instance. This constitutes a relevant forum allowing EU Member States to exchange on thematic issues of common interest and share their vision and experience with their counterparts and DG EAC.

The **VET-Business Forum initiative** is another interesting example. Conceived as a high-level event that takes place every two years in Brussels, it brings together all relevant stakeholders from different levels (EU, national, regional, etc.), such as policy makers, companies, SMEs, social partners, VET providers, teachers and trainers, entrepreneurs, guidance practitioners, human resources experts, youth and student organisations.

Though none of them has tackled the topic of international cooperation in VET yet, it can be reasonably assumed that the experience gained in these settings and the links they have established with a wide range of VET stakeholders across Europe would put them in a good position for e.g. organising future engaging with stakeholders' events on the topic.

¹¹⁷ At the time the assignment was contracted, it was initially commissioned by DG EAC. By late 2014, DG EAC's responsibilities for VET were transferred to DG EMPL.

¹¹⁸

[http://www.etf.europa.eu/webatt.nsf/0/6962215F9248640DC12578AF002F1BFA/\\$file/Torino%20declaration.pdf](http://www.etf.europa.eu/webatt.nsf/0/6962215F9248640DC12578AF002F1BFA/$file/Torino%20declaration.pdf). Inspired by the Education and Training 2020 initiative, the EU Employment Strategy, the Copenhagen Process as well as the priority objectives set in the G20 agenda, the Torino process was launched in 2010. It takes the form of a biannual participatory analytical review of the status and progress of VET in the ETF partner countries. The Process informs the ETF's recommendations to the EU's external assistance instruments and serves as a basis for the design of the ETF's support strategy to partner countries.

¹¹⁹ i.e. DG EAC supports three platforms of this kind oriented mostly to the neighbourhood countries.

¹²⁰ E.g. with the U.S, Canada, China or India. These bilateral elements do not specifically focus on VET but may nevertheless support cooperation in this area – as in the case of agreements with the U.S and Canada in particular.

In addition to the above and to existing overarching frameworks (e.g. EQF¹²¹ or EQAVET) or tools (e.g. Europass ECVET, etc. centered on European countries), more targeted initiatives exist.

These initiatives are relevant in the light of potential developments in the area of international cooperation in VET at the EU level. All of them indeed focus on themes of interest in a globalised economy context (apprenticeships, skills mismatches, skills anticipation including by sectors, etc.) and build on interesting approaches (e.g. engaging with stakeholders/raising awareness events, data collection and dissemination tools, support to reforms, smart use of funding and resources, etc.).

All are nevertheless centred on intra-European relationships and related issues. Tailoring these to the needs of international cooperation in the sector would require expanding their remit including at funding level (i.e. reflecting upon means to fund actions in the area). As noted in the introductory part, no budget lines of the subsequent EU Education and Training programmes (including current Erasmus+ programme) have been specifically dedicated to support initiatives in international cooperation in VET though.

The **European Alliance for Apprenticeships (EAfA)** is one of them. It brings together public authorities, businesses, social partners, VET providers, youth representatives, and other key actors in order to promote apprenticeship schemes and initiatives across Europe. The initiative builds on three strands of action: reform of apprenticeship systems; promotion of the benefits of apprenticeships, and smart use of funding and resources. Its achievements to date have included: establishing bilateral and national agreements, initiatives, and cooperation mechanisms; supported the reform of apprenticeship systems, and raised awareness of the benefits of apprenticeships, as well as contributing to the policy environment through studies and dialogue.

The **Sector Skills Alliances (SSAs)** is another potentially inspiring initiative. Building on the lessons learned from the Leonardo da Vinci programme, it has been designed to promote European cooperation within specific sector(s) of the economy. More specifically it is aimed to address the Bruges Communiqué priority objective to support the reform of VET to ensure better alignment with market needs.

The **EU Skills Panorama** is an online platform presenting quantitative and qualitative information on short- and medium-term skills needs, skills supply and skills mismatches draws on data and forecasts compiled at EU and Member State level. One of its main purposes is to highlight the fastest growing occupations as well as the top 'bottleneck' occupations with high numbers of unfilled vacancies. The website contains detailed information sector by sector, profession by profession and country by country¹²².

The above has been developed by DG EAC (and/or jointly with other DGs). Thanks to these and others, DG EAC has gained considerable experience with data collection and research in the area of VET. This has been both complemented and fed by the work of the two European Commission (EC) agencies specialised in the area of VET: the **European Training Foundation (ETF)** (focusing on work to develop education and training systems in the Western Balkans, Turkey, the EU neighbourhood countries and Central Asia¹²³) and the **European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training (Cedefop)** which provides information and analysis of VET systems, policies, research and practice in the EU.

¹²¹ The EQF Advisory Committee puts for instance a quite strong focus on international aspect.

¹²² <http://euskills Panorama.cedefop.europa.eu/>

¹²³ ETF has gained solid knowledge and experience in international cooperation in VET through actions aimed to support policy dialogue with 30 countries as well as technical assistance, data collection and policy analysis over past years. More specifically, the agency has paid increased attention to international cooperation in VET since 2009, further to the G20 Seoul conference and when it started to take part in the Inter-Agency Working Group on TVET.

ETF's actions are focused on a policy learning instrumental approach aimed to support reforms and VET strategies implementation across its partner countries. The approach involves putting strong emphasis on the features and needs of national VET systems in light with labour market requirements and assessing how to best align them. Over recent years, the agency has focused on **thematic areas** such as: skills anticipation, work-based learning, quality assurance in VET, national qualifications frameworks/EQF, etc. ETF has also recently issued an ad-hoc methodology to identify good practices in the area of employability in VET.

Whereas ETF focuses on third countries, **Cedefop's** remit is on EU/EFTA countries. Its core mission consists of supporting the European Commission, Member States and social partners in designing and implementing policies for an attractive VET that promotes excellence and social inclusion. Cedefop's activities mainly consists of data collection, production of thematic studies, policy reviews, organisation of thematic events at the European level, development of knowledge sharing online tools (e.g. the EU Skills Panorama), etc.

The agency has gained a wide and solid thematic expertise in the VET sector over years. Themes which currently receive much attention include: skill mismatch, skills anticipation, skills needs in sectors, empowering young people quality assurance in VET and more recently skills for the green economy, etc. With regard to the latter, it is worth noting that Cedefop is an active member of the Inter-Agency Working Group for Greening TVET and Skills Development.

International cooperation in VET cannot be seen in isolation and makes sense if it is thought in the light of education and training but also wider economic and cooperation aid policies for instance. Besides the experience and expertise gained across DG EAC and above-mentioned agencies, other DGs (e.g. DG Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion (EMPL), DG Development and Cooperation (DEVCO) or DG Enterprise (ENTR)/now DG GROW¹²⁴ have also undertaken initiatives of potential relevance for the topic.

In late 2013, DG DEVCO published for instance a study on '**TVET and Skills development in EU Development Cooperation**'¹²⁵. It concentrates on cooperation in TVET for the purpose of development cooperation and can be seen as a complementary report to this study (which does not cover development cooperation).

The **e-Skills for the 21st Century** strategy¹²⁶ operated by DG ENTR/now DG GROW can be also outlined. Its key actions have included the organisation of the e-Skills Week (26-30 March 2012) which demonstrated a strong mobilisation of stakeholders in a wide range of pan-European and national activities including 2.235 events involving over 1.8 million participants in 37 European countries. A new campaign is planned in 2014.

In conclusion, a set of relevant capacities, expertise and instruments which could be potentially used for the purpose of developing actions in international cooperation in VET exists at the EU level but would need to be adapted/widened in scope. At this stage, further efforts are needed in order to reflect on and achieve the Bruges Communiqué vision for internationalisation of VET.

¹²⁴ DG GROW – Directorate General for Internal Market, Industry, Entrepreneurship and SMEs

¹²⁵ <http://capacity4dev.ec.europa.eu/public-employment-social-protection/blog/tvet-and-skills-development-eu-development-cooperation>

¹²⁶ http://ec.europa.eu/enterprise/sectors/ict/e-skills/index_en.htm

10 Recommendations

This section builds on the above and was also informed by exchanges with key stakeholders¹²⁷ during a workshop organised for the purpose of the study in November 2014. The event was the occasion to present the key findings of the study and get stakeholders' views on:

- What could be the rationale for the EU's engagement in international cooperation in VET, and;
- What kind of actions the EU could develop and what added value it would bring for the EU as a whole, for separate EU countries and for third countries.

The information supplied below starts outlining a set of general considerations on the specificity of the EU towards any potential intervention on the topic. It then lists three main areas where the European Commission (EC) could intervene and ends with recommendations for future actions to be potentially taken at EU level in the area.

10.1 General considerations on the specificity of the EU towards potential intervention on the topic

The EU is in a unique position as it covers countries with a diversity of VET systems but at the same time countries which have very strong (including among the strongest) and well-renowned VET models. This represents in itself a non-negligible opportunity to showcase European VET systems.

The EU also gathers some Member States that have VET systems in transition from which other countries that are also in transition can learn the do's and don'ts.

The EU has gained quite a lot of interest and experience (including cooperation) in areas such as:

- Apprenticeships and work-based learning – through its Member States including some with the best known apprenticeship systems worldwide, the EU has gained a solid knowledge and cooperation experience on/with different models in the area
- Cooperation with employers, development of qualifications, skills anticipation and matching – given the social dialogue structures in EU countries there is a lot of experience how to do this and again there is already intra-EU cooperation on this (around the EQF and the other qualifications instruments)
- Recognition of skills and competences and assessment in the context of VET – in this area too several EU countries are well advanced and there is a lot to share.

Furthermore, besides Australia and Switzerland the EU has a tradition in VET research which is not so developed in many other industrialised countries. The fact that the EU covers a variety of models can mean that third countries can learn not just from one model but can be accompanied to develop a model that suits them building on a range of experience. There is now quite a unique pool of expertise in the EU on VET and not just on VET of one country but VET of several countries.

Finally, there are European companies investing in these target countries and they could be interested. In light of these opportunities deriving from the nature of VET in Europe but also of the main weaknesses/obstacles and promising approaches observed across the report, the table below outlines possible areas for EU intervention against above-mentioned opportunities. The following table summarises the potential areas/means for an EU/EC intervention in light of the above.

¹²⁷ National representatives at policy or VET provider level from EU/EFTA countries among the most active players (Germany, France, UK, Finland and Switzerland) in the area and one representative from an international organisation (UNESCO-UNEVOC).

Table 6. Possible areas/means for EU intervention light of opportunities (nature of VET in Europe)

Opportunity	Possible areas of EU intervention	Possible means for EU intervention
Diversity of VET systems across the EU	- To build on this diversity for making third countries (and key stakeholders within those) aware of the richness of the EU/EU 28 Member States in terms of experience and lessons that can be drawn from them - To map and disseminate information on individual VET systems across the EU in a way to be of interest and usable for third countries keen to engage on international cooperation	- Developing an ad-hoc online platform that would be dedicated to the promotion of European VET systems abroad. This could include ad-hoc functionalities for supporting international cooperation/information on the topic - Strengthening European Commission's participation international events (led by international organisations or other relevant bodies including companies) focusing on the topic - Organising events on the topic at international level (e.g., jointly with ASEM) - Reinforcing/re-targeting past or existing policy dialogues with key partners (e.g. China, India, Australia, Canada or the U.S) on cooperation in VET
Member States with strong and well renowned VET models	- To foster mutual learning across the EU on what works well in these Member States in the specific area of international cooperation - To support data collection and dissemination of information lessons learnt from these Member States and assess (via evaluation studies, peer learning activities with key stakeholders, etc.) whether, where and how any good practice can be replicated across EU Member States - To financially support promising initiatives and/or assess the extent to which any of them could be replicated at a wider EU level	- Through the VET-Business Forum, WG on VET, the EAfA, the Sector Skills Alliances, or other events, etc. - Through an EU platform (e.g. Skills Panorama whose scope would be widened or a brand new one specifically devoted to the topic) - Through further comparative studies on the topic, thematic events at EU and international level, etc. - Through other international settings such as the Inter-Agency Working Group on TVET, increased participation in ASEM, etc.
Member States with VET systems in transition	- To make VET-related information on these Member States more visible worldwide so as to raise third countries' awareness of their potential similarities with these EU countries and lessons they may learn from them - To encourage these countries to integrate the concept of international cooperation in their systems (where applicable) whilst reforming it	Through all the above
Tradition in VET research and cooperation experience on various themes	To increase the visibility and promote the image of the EU as a strong player in the VET sector in line with its research and cooperation experience in a wide range of key areas including: apprenticeship, work-based learning, cooperation with employers, skills anticipation/mismatching, recognition of skills and competences, etc.	- Through all the above - Defining related missions to e.g. ETF (e.g. above example of cooperation with ILO on work on policy review methodologies for VET systems) and Cedefop in this remit.

10.2 Potential areas for EU/EC intervention

Based on the findings of the study and further exchanges with stakeholders during above-mentioned workshop, the following suggestions (not in a specific order) were made to identify potential areas where the EU could intervene:

- International cooperation in VET cross-cuts several policy areas (e.g. education and training, employment, cooperation aid, etc.). It is thus crucial to approach it in the light of global value chains. With its mixed range of experience and expertise across various policy areas of interest, the European Commission could play a valuable role in the area.
- The topic is relatively new (or simply inexistent) on policy agendas and there is a general lack of common understanding about what is behind international cooperation in VET and what works well, where and how across EU/EFTA Member States. There is a possible room for the EC to contribute to knowledge sharing in the area with its Member States but also with international organisations.
- There is a general lack of data and evidence-based research in the area worldwide: the EU has gained experience and expertise in data collection and research in VET in Europe. This could be promoted both within the EU and beyond with its current experience could be possibly widened in scope too.
- The international cooperation in VET landscape is highly fragmented (initiatives of various scale and nature, lack of communication/coordinated approaches) among key stakeholders. An overarching online tool allowing countries/VET providers to e.g. make their initiatives more visible is missing at the European level. This could be a potential room for EC action.
- Increasing competition in the area is emerging worldwide: there is need to showcase the richness of EU/EFTA VET systems, to promote excellence in VET and make the EU an attractive learning destination.
- Supporting international cooperation requires funding: financial constraints are reported in the vast majority of countries including the most active ones in the field. The EU has experience with co-funding cooperation initiatives in VET across Europe but the Erasmus+ programme does not include budget lines for supporting international cooperation in VET.
- Firms in Europe are increasingly integrated into global value chains. Focusing VET cooperation within sectors that function as sub-suppliers to core industries in a particular country can strengthen economic integration and can furthermore function as a lever of European firm specialisation and competitiveness. The GOVET case is an example of how VET becomes a policy enabler of wider economic cooperation. The EC has developed sector-skills centred initiatives at the European level and could take further actions in this area.

As a result of the above, three main areas where the EU could possibly intervene have been identified as follows:

- Knowledge brokering
- Communication and awareness raising about VET in the EU
- Strengthening/developing EU actions on internationalisation of VET

The information set out below outlines for each of these areas: the rationale for an EU intervention; the potential EU added value; examples of potential EU-level activities and the potential impact of a general EU/EC intervention at EU and national level.

Area of action 1: Knowledge brokering

Rationale for an EU/EC action:

Lack of data and evidence-based research on the topic is an important obstacle denoted at both at EU/EFTA countries and international organisations level. Over past years, the EU has gained considerable experience/expertise in the field of VET research at the European level and within several neighbouring countries) and in organising/taking part in mutual learning events in VET area.

Potential EU added value:

The EU could emerge as an active player worldwide in the field of data collection, evidence-based research and methodological/policy reviews in the area. Its rich experience, gained through all the EU services, and in particular – DG EAC, ETF and Cedefop could be better brought together, coordinated and made visible. This would be valuable for promoting the EU expertise in VET in the remit of EU/EC collaboration with the international organisations involved on the topic and across both individual EU/EFTA Member States and interested third countries looking for data on EU/EFTA national VET systems, specificities and experiences. In the same vein, the above would be also valuable for gaining further insights on third countries' VET systems (including those managed at decentralised level such as India or China, etc.), their individual needs and successful policies and practices from an international cooperation perspective. Among other things, such an action would possibly support reflections within some of the EU Member States with similar systems or needs.

Examples of potential EU-level activities:

- Improving statistics and policy reviews methodologies
- Supporting data collection/evidence-based research on the topic in general and on targeted themes where the EU has gained solid knowledge/experience
- Fostering cooperation with international organisations involved in the area

What the Commission could do:

- Integrating 'international cooperation in VET' into e.g. Cedefop and ETF mandates
- Both agencies have gained solid research and methodological experience in data collection and comparison in VET. ETF could have a leading role in policy review methodologies for instance. Both agencies have gained solid knowledge in various relevant areas such as apprenticeship, skills mismatches/anticipation, green skills, work-based learning, quality assurance in VET, NQF/EQF, etc. A widened scope of their research activities could also be complemented with the organisations of conferences, seminars or webinars on the topic.
- Fostering a coordinated approach among the Commission services. International cooperation in VET makes sense if it is tied to wider economic, employment and cooperation aid policies. The EC has the capacity to enhance its overall capabilities bringing together the respective knowledge and experiences of its services. This would also ensure that overlaps/duplication of efforts are avoided.
- Fostering cooperation with international organisations: in the cooperation with UNESCO, OECD, and ILO, the World Bank through the Inter-Agency working groups on TVET and Greening TVET and Skills Development, identify themes, research or dissemination-related work of common interest so as to avoid overlaps and envisage joint action where/if relevant.

Potential impact:

The above could contribute to strengthening the visibility and attractiveness of the EU

as a 'skilled region'. At the EU level, this could also help gain a better knowledge of emerging trends worldwide (what could be in turn used to inform intra EU-Open Method of Coordination (OMC¹²⁸)). At EU/EFTA countries level, this could increase the visibility of their individual systems, strengthen their national expertise and generate an overall scale effect. This would also allow third countries to get access to the EU wide expertise in VET area and gain deeper knowledge on individual EU/EFTA VET systems and experiences.

¹²⁸ http://ec.europa.eu/culture/policy/strategic-framework/european-coop_en.htm

Area of intervention 2: Communication and awareness raising about VET in the EU

Rationale for an EU intervention:

Complementary with improvements needed in the sphere of data collection and evidence-based research and their dissemination that could be addressed through the above, no comprehensive tool or action aimed to effectively communicate about possibilities of international cooperation in VET with EU countries exist yet. The EU could consider supporting the development of such tools or actions.

Potential EU added value:

The EU has gained experience with both promotional campaigns (on policies or programmes/actions) and with the development/maintenance of online platforms targeted at policy makers and key stakeholders involved in the area(s) considered (e.g. the EU Skills Panorama platform in the field of VET across Europe). Its solid experience in the field of international cooperation in higher education could be also valuable if better bridged with VET (so as to foster mutual understanding and synergies across both sectors in an international perspective).

Examples of potential EU-level activities:

- Launch an externally-oriented promotional campaign
- Providing funding or knowledge-sharing EU-level platforms for different VET providers across the EU
- Participate in relevant events or fairs worldwide

What the Commission could do:

- Conducting a **promotional campaign** that would target third countries. One of its main purposes could be to explain and market different EU processes and tools linked to the Copenhagen process and also EU principles which underlie successful EU VET systems, e.g. partnership with the industry, practice rather than theory-orientation etc.
- Creating of **platform for EU/EFTA VET policy makers and VET providers** (VET institutions and companies) to showcase their international activities for third country interested parties to consult
- **Participating** on a more regular basis **in ad-hoc events worldwide on the topic**; co-organise events with e.g. ASEM, etc.

Potential impact:

The development of an EU brand on the topic could contribute to the visibility and attractiveness of the EU as a VET learning destination. Promoting the variety of VET systems in the EU to third countries and communicating on the means and possibilities of international cooperation with EU countries would support the strategic and commercial positioning and recognition of EU VET systems, qualifications and certificates.

Area of intervention 3: Strengthen/ develop EU actions on internationalisation of VET

Rationale for an EU intervention:

The EU has developed various intra-EU practices and tools in the context of the OMC (e.g. tools on skills and qualifications – ECVET, EQAVET, etc.-, the European Alliance for Apprenticeships, the Sector Skills Alliances, etc.) and at programme level (i.e. co-funding cooperation initiatives in VET in Europe). It has also gained experience (including to varying extent in VET) through policy dialogue with individual third countries (Australia, Canada or the U.S, China, India, etc.). Building on, strengthening and opening up these for the purpose of international cooperation in VET could be a further area where existing EU capabilities and expertise could be strengthened and widened in scope.

Potential EU added value:

Having an EU-level impetus would strengthen the position of international cooperation in VET on EU MS' agenda. It would give strategic direction and upscaling possibilities to EU Member States which already engage in the area. It would also incentivise others, which do not or less, to do so, or would provide them with opportunities to do so. This would help "level out the playing field" across the EU.

Examples of potential EU-level activities:

- Financing new sharing and learning actions between EU and third countries to promote excellence in VET, in particular mobility and also in key sectors of the global economy
- Supporting trans-national sectoral partnerships to make the link between VET and employment stronger
- Providing funding or knowledge-sharing EU-level platforms for different VET providers across the EU

What the Commission could do:

- **Consider the opening up certain existing OMC** initiatives to third countries, e.g. the Alliance for Apprenticeships, tools on skills and qualifications, etc.
- **Adding new priorities linked to international cooperation in existing EU funding** (rather than increasing the funding envelope), e.g. by opening Erasmus + to VET pupils and trainers/trainers

Potential impact:

International cooperation in VET would move up the agenda across the EU. Interest amongst countries previously inactive but with potential (i.e. effective VET systems, active VET providers, or large export sectors) would increase. International exchanges, technical assistance, and capacity-building would improve the quality of VET in third countries and at home also, making it more relevant to international industries' or learners' needs.

10.3 Recommendations

The following recommendations derive from the above and have been clustered into the following categories: what the EU/EC should do and what it could do. This is complemented with additional considerations on sectoral approaches.

What the EU should do:

- To actively contribute to and support data collection, evidence-based research in the area
- To integrate the topic in the mandate and missions of Cedefop and ETF;
- To foster synergies (on the topic) between VET and higher education at DG EAC/EMPL level as well as wider dialogue with other DGs (e.g. DG GROW, DG DEVCO, etc.);
- To foster its collaboration with international organisations notably in the remit of the Inter-Agency working group on TVET;
- To raise EU/EFTA Member States' awareness on the topic through the OMC (e.g. adding the theme in events supported by the WG on VET and/or the VET-Business Forum).

The long tradition and sound expertise the EU has in VET research should be made more visible worldwide and be used for the purpose of better defining and understanding what works or not in international cooperation in VET. This could be beneficial for the EU (opportunity to take a leading role in research/methodological area on the topic), EU/EFTA Member States (better understanding of the topic in terms strengths and weaknesses, good practices across European countries, etc.) and international organisations (development of a more common vision and synergies).

What the EU could do:

- To create a platform for EU/EFTA VET policy makers and VET providers (VET institutions and companies) to showcase their international activities for third country interested parties to consult;
- To conduct a promotional campaign that would target third countries;
- To open up certain existing OMC initiatives to third countries, e.g. the Alliance for Apprenticeships, tools on skills and qualifications, etc.;
- To add new priorities linked to international cooperation in existing EU funding (rather than increasing the funding envelope), e.g. by opening Erasmus+ to VET pupils and trainers/trainers.

Most of these activities will have a cost and/or require the EC to re-allocate existing funding. Before investing in these tools or areas, further exchanges with the EU Member States (if/where possible involving policy makers but also other key stakeholders in the area) would be recommended in order to allow the EC to get a better understanding of their individual interests, needs and expectations (e.g. in terms of knowledge sharing and promotion of individual VET systems worldwide) and to assess whether and how given tools or initiatives would be helpful to them/add value to other existing tools at either national or international organisations level, etc.

A recommendation that emerged from the workshop was that gaining a better understanding on the added value and impact of existing measures in the area would be crucial. In the light of the highly fragmented nature of the international cooperation landscape measuring, this is nevertheless seen as particularly challenging. In a period of economic downturn assessing the potential added value, cost-effectiveness and impact of proposed measures at the EU level should be considered.

Sectoral approaches:

Another area where the EU could intervene regards sectoral approaches. As noted above, focusing VET cooperation within sectors that function as sub-suppliers to core industries in a particular country can strengthen economic integration - and can furthermore function as a lever of European firm specialisation and competitiveness.

At country level, the GOVET case is an example of how VET becomes a policy enabler of wider economic cooperation. At a local or regional cluster level, VET institutions can play an enabling role in strengthening the international cooperation among clusters and sectors through for example development of joint curricula.

In European countries with dual based VET, systems are seeking to expand opportunities through “system export”. One of the characteristics of dual based systems is that they have typically grown out of institutional structures that have evolved closely connected to labour market policies over a substantial time, hence direct system transfer models are likely to fail.

Within the European Alliance for Apprenticeship countries in the EU with dual based systems have formed a consortium to develop a tool box of policies and practices derived from dual VET systems in the EU. Such cooperation could at medium term lay the foundation for a more integrated approach to capacity building.

Against this background, an EU intervention in the area would be probably relevant at a certain point in time. This could for instance take the form of improving knowledge sharing in the area or even supporting the development of trans-national sectoral partnerships ultimately. Some sector skills-related initiatives (e.g. the Sector Skills Alliances, the EU Skills Panorama) exist at the European level, but a deeper reflection on the topic in an international perspective would merit to bring together different DGs in the discussion whilst gaining more knowledge and evidence from potentially promising measures such as this outlined above could be recommended too.

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