

DRAFT THEMATIC GUIDANCE FICHE FOR DESK OFFICERS

VET AND ADULT LEARNING

VERSION 2 – 27/01/2014

RELEVANT PROVISIONS IN THE LEGISLATION

Regulation	Article
CPR (1303/2013)	Article 9 (10) - Thematic objective: investing in education, training and vocational training for skills and lifelong learning Annex I CPR: section 5.5 Annex XI Thematic ex-ante conditionalities: section 9.3
ESF Regulation (1304/2013)	Article 3: Scope of support <u>(c)</u> Investing in education, skills and life-long learning through: (iii) Enhancing access to lifelong learning, upgrading the skills and competences of the workforce and increasing the labour market relevance of education and training systems; including improving the quality of vocational education and training and the establishment and development of work-based learning and apprenticeship schemes such as dual learning systems
ERDF Regulation (1301/2013)	Article 3: Scope of support (d) Investment in social, health, research, innovation business and educational infrastructure (e) Investment in the development of endogenous potential through fixed investment in equipment and small-scale infrastructure; including small-scale cultural and sustainable tourism infrastructure, services to enterprises, support to research and innovation bodies and investment in technology and applied research in enterprises Article 5: Investment priorities (10) Investing in education, training and vocational training for skills and lifelong learning by developing education and training infrastructure

EAFRD Regulation (1305/2013)	Article 5: Union priorities for rural development (1) (c) fostering lifelong learning and vocational training in the agricultural and forestry sectors
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This is a draft document based on the new ESIF Regulations published in OJ 347 of 20 December 2013 and on the most recent version of the relevant Commission's draft implementing and delegated acts. It may still require review to reflect the content of these draft legal acts once they are adopted.

1. Rationale for the policy and main objectives

The treaty stipulates in the *Article 166* (ex-article 150 TEC) that “the Union shall implement a vocational training policy which shall support and supplement the action of the Member States, while fully respecting the responsibility of the Member States for the content and organisation of vocational training”. Union actions cover therefore the following: facilitate adaptation to industrial changes, improve initial and continuing vocational training, facilitate access to VET and encourage mobility of instructors and trainees, stimulate cooperation on training between educational or training establishments and firms, develop exchanges of information and experience on issues common to the training systems of the Member States. In addition, VET is a useful policy to reduce poverty by ensuring that the skills match better the needs of the labour market and hence that people have a better access to the job market.

Article 165 (ex-Article 149 TEC) stipulates likewise that “the Union shall contribute to the development of quality education by encouraging cooperation between Member States and, if necessary, by supporting and supplementing their action, while fully respecting the responsibility of the Member States for the content of teaching and the organisation of education systems and their cultural and linguistic diversity”.

European cooperation process in the field of VET

The Commission acts together with EU governments, employers' and workers' groups and countries outside the EU to strengthen vocational education across Europe. The basis for this is the [Copenhagen Process](#). Since 2002, the countries involved have worked together to develop innovative policies and actions. The overall aim is to improve the quality of vocational training and to encourage more individuals to make wider use of vocational learning opportunities, whether at school, in higher education, in the workplace, or through private courses. The actions and tools developed aim to allow users to link and build on learning acquired at various times, in both formal and non-formal contexts.

National education ministers have met every two years to review the process. The latest revision took place in December 2010. The European Ministers for Vocational Training for 33 countries, the European Social Partners and the European Commission met in Bruges, Belgium, to set the priorities of the Copenhagen Process for 2011-2020.

This package is known as the [Bruges Communiqué](#).

The Bruges Communiqué contains a vision of VET to be reached by 2020:

- Attractive and inclusive VET;
- High quality initial VET which enables learners to acquire specific vocational skills;
- Work-based learning is included in all initial VET courses,;
- Easily accessible and career-oriented continuing VET for all employees;
- Improve permeability between the different education and training subsystems (school education, VET, higher education, adult education) and cater for the validation of non-formal and informal learning, including competences acquired in the work place;
- A European education and training area, with transparent qualifications systems which enable the transfer and accumulation of learning outcomes, as well as the recognition of qualifications and competences, and which facilitate transnational mobility;
- Substantially increased opportunities for transnational mobility of VET students and VET professionals;
- Easily accessible and high-quality lifelong information, guidance and counselling.

The recent Rethinking Education [Communication](#) highlights the role of VET in both fighting youth unemployment in Europe (the importance of work-based learning, dual VET systems) as well as in support to growth (the concept of VET excellence to support smart and sustainable growth).

It highlighted following actions in the field of VET:

- High-quality dual VET systems – "European Alliance for Apprenticeships"
- Aligning VET with regional/local economic development
- Permeability and development of higher VET to respond to emerging skills shortages
- Strengthening partnerships and networks between companies and VET providers

These actions are further developed in the accompanying Staff Working Document [Vocational Education and Training for better skills, growth and jobs](#).

European cooperation process in the field of adult education

The [Council Resolution on a European Agenda for Adult Learning](#), November 2011, sets a vision of where adult learning systems should be in 2020 in the overall context of both the Europe 2020 and E&T 2020 strategies. It underlines the need to increase adult participation in learning as the 2020 target of 15% is far from being achieved in most countries (EU average 8.9% in 2011); the need to increase access to high quality and equitable learning opportunities at any time in life; and the need for an enhanced role for local authorities, employers, social partners, civil society and cultural organisations. The Agenda focuses on providing second-chance opportunities for low qualified adults to strengthen their basic skills, such as literacy, numeracy and digital knowledge, and complementing policy in other areas such as Copenhagen process on VET, Bologna and modernising schools and higher education agendas.

Member States designated National Coordinators for the implementation of the Agenda whose main role is to:

- Ensure effective liaison with relevant ministries and stakeholders, social partners, businesses, non-governmental organisations and civil society organisations with a view to improving coherence between policies on adult learning and broader socio-economic policies;
- Facilitate cooperation with other Member States and the Commission in implementing the adult learning agenda.

The Rethinking Education Communication underlined the importance of adult learning in providing basic skills education for all and called for evidence-based policies drawing on the results of the Survey on Adult Skills (PIAAC). Moreover, the Communication noted the alarmingly low adult participation in lifelong learning, urging efforts to increase the participation rates (see table below).

Table 6.1. Adult participation in lifelong learning by sex and country of birth (%)

	2009	2012						
	Total	Total	Males	Females	Native-born	Foreign-born		Sub-total
					EU 27	Non EU 27		
EU 27 countries	9.3	9.0p	8.4	9.7	8.9	9.9	11.1	10.7
Belgium	6.8	6.6	6.2	6.9	6.1	8.0	9.1	8.7
Bulgaria	1.4	1.5	1.4	1.5	1.5	:	:	:
Czech Republic	6.8	10.8	10.5	11.1	10.9	8.8	6.4	7.9
Denmark	31.2	31.6	25.4	37.8	31.6	30.2	32.1	31.5
Germany	7.8	7.9	8.0	7.8	8.2	:	:	:
Estonia	10.5	12.9	10.6	14.9	13.8	:	6.6	7.0
Ireland	6.3	7.1	6.7	7.4	6.7	6.9	12.3	8.5
Greece	3.3	2.9	3.1	2.7	3.1	(2.8)	1.3	1.6
Spain	10.4	10.7	9.9	11.6	11.2	7.2	9.2	8.6
France	5.7	5.7	5.4	6.0	5.8	4.5	5.1	5.0
Croatia	2.3	2.4	2.3	2.6	2.4	:	(2.1)	(2.3)
Italy	6.0	6.6	6.1	7.0	7.0	3.3	3.6	3.5
Cyprus	7.8	7.4	7.0	7.8	8.1	5.1	5.8	5.4
Latvia	5.3	7.0	6.0	7.9	7.3	:	5.1	5.2
Lithuania	4.5	5.2	4.3	5.9	5.2	:	:	:
Luxembourg	13.4b	13.9	14	13.8	15.6	11.7	15.5	12.4
Hungary	2.7	2.8	2.6	3.0	2.8	(4.3)	:	4.2
Malta	6.1	7.0	6.7	7.4	7.1	:	(7.9)	6.1
Netherlands	17.0	16.5p	16.0	17.0	16.2	18.6	17.7	17.9
Austria	13.8	14.1	13.0	15.2	14.7	16.4	8.8	11.7
Poland	4.7	4.5p	3.8	5.1	4.4	:	:	:
Portugal	6.5	10.6	10.3	10.9	10.2	12.0	14.8	14.1
Romania	1.5	1.4	1.4	1.3	1.4	:	:	:
Slovenia	14.6	13.8	11.5	16.1	14.6	(8.3)	5.7	5.9
Slovakia	2.8	3.1	2.7	3.5	3.0	:	:	:
Finland	22.1	24.5	20.7	28.4	24.3	25.7	29.7	28.0
Sweden	22.2p	26.7	20.0	33.5	26.7	22.9	28.0	26.5
United Kingdom	20.1	15.8	14.3	17.4	15.3	16.1	20.0	18.7
Montenegro	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:
Iceland	25.1	27.3	23.5	31.0	28.1	14.7	23.8	20.5
MK*	3.3	4.0	4.0	3.9	:	:	:	:
Serbia	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:
Turkey	2.3	3.2	3.2	3.1	:	:	:	:
Liechtenstein	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:
Norway	18.1	20.0	18.8	21.3	19.7	18.9	23.3	21.5
Switzerland	23.9i	29.9	31.1	28.7	32.9	26.2	21.2	24.0

Source: Eurostat (LFS). Intermediate breaks in time series for the Czech Republic (2011), Latvia (2011), the Netherlands (2010), Luxembourg (2009) and Portugal (2011). Notes: "b" = break in time series; "p" = provisional; "()" = Data lack reliability due to small sample size; ":" = data either not available or not reliable due to very small sample size.

The [Annual Growth Survey](#) 2013 noted several measures related to vocational training and adult education that should be taken to fight unemployment, improve employability and support access to jobs. These include support for entrepreneurship; facilitation of transition from school to work, e.g. through dual learning models; improving lifelong learning systems throughout working life, including for older workers; and enhancing the connections between education and lifelong learning systems and labour market needs.

2. How to operationalise the main policy areas with regard to ESI Funds

The following part provides details on corresponding policy measures on:

- Work-based learning (incl. apprenticeships and dual systems)
- Responsiveness of VET to labour market demands
- Attractiveness and excellence in VET
- Mobility in VET
- Quality assurance in VET and LLL

- f) Development of basic skills/key competences in VET
- g) Reducing early school leaving in VET
- h) Increasing adult participation in LLL and enhancing the basic skills of low qualified
- i) Infrastructure

a) Work-based learning (incl. apprenticeships and dual systems)

The value of work-based learning – and notably of apprenticeships or "dual training" systems - in facilitating youth employment and increasing economic competitiveness is clearly recognised. Countries with strong and attractive VET systems, and notably those with well-established apprenticeship systems, tend to perform better in terms of youth employment. Despite this, the supply of apprenticeship and traineeship places in the EU remains under-developed. The picture varies greatly by country. Efforts are needed to invest in expanding the offer of apprenticeships and traineeships in countries where opportunities for this type of learning remain very limited.¹

Forms of work-based learning

Countries can tackle this challenge in different ways, by investing in work-based learning which is tailored to their situation:

- Alternance schemes or **apprenticeships** are typically known in Austria and Germany as the "dual system". These are based on the integration of companies as training providers together with VET schools or other education/training institutes. In these programmes, learners spend a significant time on training in companies. In parallel, in "alternating" periods, they acquire general and occupation-related knowledge and key competences in VET schools or other education/training institutes. This model typically shows strong results in terms of successful transitions to the labour market.
- Another model is school-based VET which includes **on the job training periods** in companies, typically covering internships, work placements or traineeships that are incorporated in VET programmes leading to formal qualifications.
- Finally, work-based learning can be integrated in a **school-based programme**, through on-site labs, workshops, kitchens, restaurants, junior or practice firms, simulations or real business/industry project assignments which aim to create a "real life" work environment. But the impact of this approach on increasing youth employment is less clear.

The scope of measures in the field of work-based learning covers:

- Developing **strategies and guidelines** to enhance work-based learning in VET;
- Development of **apprenticeships** or similar programmes, **work-based learning elements** in school based VET programmes;
- **Incentives for enterprises** to provide training or employment (including financial support to enterprises for apprenticeship places, subsidise wages for apprentices, special grant scheme for apprentices with special needs and high risk of drop out);
- Campaigns encouraging stronger involvement of enterprises in VET in curricula and planning;

¹ For more information on apprenticeships and traineeships, please refer to following studies:
http://ec.europa.eu/education/vocational-education/doc/forum12/supply_en.pdf
<http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=738&langId=en&pubId=6717>
http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/EN/Files/6116_en.pdf

- Services to assist in finding training places for VET learners in enterprises (through strengthening the responsibility of VET schools in supporting students in finding training places or giving this role to chambers);
- Learning methods in VET that include simulated or real business experience (including in the field of entrepreneurship skills).

b) Responsiveness of VET to labour market demands

The aim is to develop a demand oriented VET with the following features:

- Systematic **partnerships between VET institutions and social partners, employment services, authorities in charge of VET, research** (skills forecasting) to define curricula, occupational profiles, qualifications (including activities such as VET being part of the employment policies, strategic cooperation between VET institutions and employment services, participation of VET authorities in the employment policies, incentives for VET institutions to cooperation with employment services and social partners);
- **Monitoring of outcomes in terms of employability and transitions of graduates** (including data collection on VET graduate employability and transition, programmes/standards/curricula taking into account of transition and employability data, legislation allowing to combine data on learning, labour market entry and career, law or regulation to encourage monitoring of transition from VET to labour market, funding schemes to encourage VET providers to use graduate transition data);
- **Improving teachers' and trainers' competences** (including practical training of teachers in companies, guidelines for VET teachers development including enterprise traineeships, services to assist in finding training places for teachers in enterprises, etc.);
- Intensive efforts in the field of **guidance** (including development of lifelong guidance strategies, national guidance fora, web-based guidance tools, guidance services for groups at risk, etc.).

c) Attractiveness and excellence of VET

Improving the attractiveness of VET has been a European policy objective since the beginning of the Copenhagen process in 2002. The examples of possible measures in this field listed below have to be seen in the overall context of improving quality of VET / reduction of skills shortages and mismatches. They should be considered as supporting activities to change the attitudes to vocational training which is in general considered as a second learning option compared to general secondary and higher education.

The examples of campaigns are only effective if they are part of orchestrated efforts including measures to increase labour market relevance of VET, improve guidance services, provide skills for professions which are needed on the labour market or incentives for enterprises to provide apprenticeships (see point a) in this chapter).

Examples of measures to increase attractiveness of VET cover:

- Education and career fairs with a focus on VET;
- Skills competitions at national, European (EuroSkills), global level (WorldSkills);
- Campaigns to attract young people to VET to meet current or future labour needs or shortages;

- Campaigns to make adults aware of the benefits of VET;
- Campaigns to encourage enterprises to provide and invest in VET and become involved in VET;
- Financial support to companies for apprenticeship places.

In the field of *excellence in VET*, the key aspects are:

- VET is incorporated in economic strategies which connect skills supply and demand, based on systematic skills monitoring and anticipation;
- VET providers have the institutional autonomy and capacity to develop a strategic approach linked to local and regional economy and react to skills challenges;
- VET providers cooperate closely with companies, authorities, technology centres and educational institutions, ranging from local partnerships to international networks
- Development of higher VET qualifications to respond to skill shortages² (for country examples see Annex 1 of the Staff Working Document [Vocational Education and Training for better skills, growth and jobs](#)).

d) Mobility in VET

Mobility periods in VET and the overall internationalisation of I-VET and C-VET contribute to making the European VET systems and labour markets more competitive in the global economy. Examples of measures contributing to this goal:

- Encouraging local and regional authorities and VET providers to develop strategies for cross-border cooperation in VET, in order to increase the mobility of learners, teachers and trainers and other VET professionals;
- Promoting VET that encourages and integrates mobility periods abroad;
- Promoting the systematic use of European transparency tools, such as EQF, ECVET and Europass.

e) Quality Assurance in LLL including VET and adult education

The European Quality Framework for VET covers initial and continuing vocational training. In addition, the report of the thematic working group on quality in adult learning will include recommendations how this and other existing frameworks might be used in or extended to cover adult education and training sector more generally.

[EQAVET recommendation](#) for quality assurance in VET:

- foresees **implementation in each MS of a national quality assurance framework in line with EQAVET by 2015;**
- defines the **quality assurance cycle in VET** including planning, implementation, evaluation, and review;
- is complemented by a **set of 10 quality indicators**: (1) quality assurance at level of VET providers, (2) training of teachers and trainers, (3) participation, (4) completion, (5) placement rate, (6) utilisation of skills at the workplace, (7) unemployment rate, (8) participation and success rate of vulnerable groups, (9) identification of skills needs, (10) better access to VET.

² For trends in skills supply, demand and imbalances per country see the EU Skills Panorama <http://euskills Panorama.ec.europa.eu/KeyIndicators/Country/>

Measures contributing to quality assurance in VET:

- promoting high quality VET provision according to the set of 10 quality indicators of the EQAVET Recommendation and monitoring of outcomes in terms of employability and transitions of graduates;

establishing a national level common quality assurance framework for VET providers as

Measures contributing to quality assurance in adult education:

- promoting the professional development of adult educators and trainers;
- encouraging the use of learner-centred pedagogies targeted towards adult learners.

f) Development of basic skills / key competences in VET

Lifelong learning strategies for the workforce include the development of the skills needed for a full participation in society. The Bruges Communiqué calls for VET to equip learners with both vocational skills and key competences as defined in the [EU framework for Key Competences for lifelong learning](#) (including four *basic skills* on mother tongue literacy, numeracy, knowledge of foreign languages, science and IT skills):

- Communication in the mother tongue
- Communication in foreign languages
- Mathematical competence and basic competences in science and technology
- Digital competence
- Learning to learn
- Social and civic competences
- Sense of initiative and entrepreneurship
- Cultural awareness and expression

g) Reducing early school leaving in VET

The Bruges Communiqué asks Member States to take preventive and remedial measures to maximise the contribution of VET to combating early school leaving. The EU level support mentioned in this context is the [Council Recommendation on policies to reduce early school leaving](#). The Recommendation uses the term 'Early School Leaving (ESL)' for those who leave education and training with only lower secondary education or less and who are no longer in education or training. It requests that strategies and measures of prevention, intervention and compensation suggested in the Recommendation address in a coherent way both general education and VET, and the challenges specific to each.

Evidence available for early school leaving and VET shows two interesting facts:

- Countries with higher enrolment rates in VET have lower overall rates of early school leaving;
- At the same time, in countries where clear statistical evidence is available such as NL, NOR, SWE and FIN, the drop-out rate in VET is higher than in general education.

This is not necessarily contradictory. While a strong VET system contributes to lowering the overall ESL rate within an education system, the ESL rate from VET may indeed be higher than from general education if, for example, VET attracts more students who have already experienced difficulties in school. In any event, the fact that ESL rates appear to be typically higher in VET than in general education underlines the importance of addressing the ESL issue within VET systems. In order to achieve the 10% Europe 2020 headline target for ESL, it will be crucial to reduce ESL from VET, where the room for improvement is biggest, and which accounts for about 50 % of upper secondary enrolment.

h) Increasing adult participation in LLL and enhancing the basic skills of low qualified

The reasons for focusing on the low-qualified and poorly educated in adult education are:

- The number of jobs for workers with low skills will decline by 12 million by 2020. This group is also hardest hit by unemployment as a consequence of the current recession. So, as the disadvantages are stacking up against them, more reason to improve their skills and qualifications.
- Meanwhile, the 7 million early school leavers are not diminishing yet with almost 15% of young people each year leaving school prematurely, and forming a steady flow of newcomers into adult learning who need a second chance.
- Furthermore, given demographic trends older people will have to work for longer, however, in 2011 the employment rate for 55-64 year olds was only 47.4% against 68.6% for the 20 to 64 year old group. The older age group also tend to have lower qualification levels and bridging their competence profile to new jobs requires increasing their basic skills to take on work, for example, in the services sector.

The [report from the High Level Group on Literacy](#), September 2012, highlights the fact that large numbers of EU citizens lack the necessary literacy skills, but most countries do not even have the necessary data to start addressing this problem. It insists that raising awareness of the problem and sweeping away the taboo around poor literacy should be part of the strategic effort, which should include surveys of the population's skills levels and monitoring progress. Possible actions to be supported by ESF, based on recommendations of this report, as part of a holistic approach to literacy across ages:

- Establishing systems to monitor adult literacy levels and practices;
- Communicating widely about the need for adult literacy development;
- Strengthening the profession of adult literacy teachers;
- Ensuring broad and varied access to learning opportunities, including at the workplace.

Although not all EU Member States are participating, the forthcoming Survey on Adult Skills (formerly known as PIAAC - Programme for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies) results (October 2013) will be an important new source of information on the literacy and numeracy levels of the adult population in Europe as well as on skills used in technology-rich environments.

In addition to enhancing the basic skills of the low qualified, increasing the overall participation in adult learning is one of the key policy measures in the field. Adult learning contributes in particular to preparing for job change and getting back to work in the recession. However, the benefits of lifelong learning for adults are wider than just employability. Comparisons show that in the Nordic countries where adult participation in lifelong learning is high, not only is the employment rate also high in these countries but they also score well on active civic participation and healthy ageing. Hence, work on adult learning includes:

- Enhancing opportunities for older people to participate in learning as well as capitalising on their knowledge and experience, for instance through intergenerational learning;
- Increasing learning opportunities for migrants;
- Improving access to guidance, validation of non-formal and informal learning and experience, as well as access to higher education for adults;
- Enhancing the digital skills of adults as well as the use of ICT in adult learning.

i) infrastructure investment for VET and Adult education

Investments in education are one of the categories of public expenditure highlighted in the 2013 Annual Growth Survey which should be prioritised and strengthened, while ensuring the efficiency of such expenditure. Furthermore, most Member States have received a CSR with regard to education and training in 2013. In a number of Member States, particularly in the less developed regions, such reforms of education and training systems may also need to be supported by investment in education infrastructure, triggering ERDF expenditure.

The ex-ante conditionality on VET and adult education should be taken into account for ERDF-funded operations in this policy area. In each case a strategic policy framework should be in place which, inter alia, explains how infrastructure needs have been appraised and how this has been translated into decisions mapping out the long-term infrastructure network, which will form the framework for co-financed investments. The strategy should also specify the financial resources to be allocated, either from Eu or national resources, to implement the envisaged measures.

In contrast to the 2007-2013 period, where infrastructure investments were eligible only in convergence regions, for 2014-2020 they are now eligible in all regions. The principle of thematic concentration allowing for a genuine focus of resources nevertheless needs to be respected. Another important change concerns the purchase of equipment, which has become an eligible expenditure from the European Social Fund. This widens the range of possibilities for the ESF to undertake education-related investments. In any case, the purchase of infrastructure, land and buildings remain non-eligible for the ESF. Infrastructure investments can be financed by the ERDF, if covered by the operational Programmes and if the budget foreseen is realistic.

The following points should be taken into account:

- VET systems traditionally require substantial and permanent investment in infrastructure to allow for practice-oriented learning with modern equipment. However, any investment in VET infrastructure should be supported by a long-term strategy on the organisation of the VET system, including the mapping of infrastructure needs.
- When a MS is taking steps to build up a work-based learning system, in which a substantial part of the practical training would take place at the premises of companies, infrastructure investment needs in VET schools should be carefully assessed with a view to ensuring sustainability.
- Cost-effectiveness is particularly important in the organisation of VET schools. Funding is unlikely to be sufficient to equip all VET schools with state-of-the-art equipment in all professions. The VET system should be organised in a cost-effective way, taking into account regional labour market needs.

- The ERDF arrangements for investments in VET should support smart growth by building up excellence in vocational education and training mainly through linkages with local and regional economic environment. This can be done through enhanced partnership with companies (including co-funding), in conformity with State Aid rules, to ensure that the investments in equipment are made in line with the needs of labour market. VET institutions can play a major role in technology diffusion and, for instance, in making the case regarding benefits of green technologies for business. VET schools which have decided to focus their core competences on the latest technologies may also be perceived as attractive partners by technological suppliers within a given field. This may offer opportunities whereby technology suppliers will invest in joint initiatives for establishing Centres of Excellence. New forms of partnerships should be supported:
 - Opening up facilities and infrastructures of VET schools in a form of basic business services
 - Co-location partnerships with creation of joint facilities shared by VET schools and companies
 - Functioning of VET schools as centres of excellence / demonstration technology centres
 - VET schools acting as technology diffusion centres for new technologies or virtual demonstration centres located in VET schools
 - VET schools assisting companies in incubation – support to product-service development
- An integrated approach with ESF investment is highly desirable in order to maximise effectiveness. Identified weaknesses in current spending, such as isolated piecemeal investments, should be addressed notably through a strategic approach. The possibilities presented by investments in the current programming period should be fully exploited and be taken into account in the programming for the new period.
- Infrastructure investment in VET should primarily focus on the necessary equipment for practical training and should go beyond the refurbishment of buildings.
- Where appropriate, investments should contribute to equal access to quality education, from a lifelong learning perspective.
- Strategic linkage should be established with any investments proposed for strengthening ICT applications for e-learning under thematic objective 2 (e.g. for teaching purposes) and the related ESF investment priority on VET and LLL.
- Priority should be given to the transformation and refurbishment of existing education premises over construction of new VET and adult education centres, in particular from a cost-effectiveness perspective... Member States should consider the multi-purpose use of training centres for the broader socio-economic objectives of regions. In the case of adult education, attention should be given to the use of existing schools outside peak hours, use of community facilities and cultural institutions, etc. and their adaption for use for educational purposes, and capacity to provide accompanying childcare services in or adjacent to the same facility.

3. Examples of practices

Vocational Education and Training

- A Slovak gas supplier and the Chamber of Trades jointly analysed skill needs in the gas industry and the challenges that VET schools face in providing the right skills. This led to the development of a new VET programme and study facilities (equipment, learning materials, teaching aids) at three VET schools. Partnerships between schools and business strengthened VET delivery, secured the quality of training, and helped to create jobs for graduates. The initiative won the second prize in the 2012 competition on good cooperation between schools and business.
- In Austria, options to move into higher education after apprenticeship (and school-based IVET that do not include entry tickets as part of the package) have existed for a long time. Since the late 1990s, acquiring the general entry ticket has become easier, with a modular exam that includes validation opportunities. However, it means completing initial training first and fees apply in optional preparatory courses. As this exam proved successful among more mature learners, the government and social partners started piloting a fast lane for apprentices in 2008. The pilot qualifies them as a skilled worker and gives them a general entry ticket to higher education at the same time. It allows young apprentices to prepare for higher education entry exams free of charge. Its aim is to expand progression opportunities, promote lifelong learning and to make apprenticeship more attractive. Although participation is still rather low, it had more than tripled by 2010 and has since then risen again by 30%.
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Further examples for VET initiatives can be found in the following documents:

- Staff Working Document [Vocational Education and Training for better skills, growth and jobs](#)
- Cedefop – Bruges Monitoring – Trends in VET policy 2010-2012 - http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/EN/Files/6116_en.pdf

Adult education

There are a number of large-scale initiatives which aimed to upskill the adult population, for example, the Adult Education Initiative (1997-2002) in Sweden which reached over 700,000 adults, Skills for Life, UK, met its 2010 target of 2.25m adults in June 2008, New Opportunities Initiative (NOI) in Portugal enrolled over half a million adults between 2005 and 2010. NALA and Aontas in Ireland have interesting schemes for the low-skilled in Ireland, particularly in relation to awareness raising and provision of literacy. In Norway and New Zealand, the workplace is an important element in basic skills provision. More generally, in Nordic countries and Slovenia, local provision in learning centres or study circles are an important feature of bringing learning to adults where they need it, close to home.

Continuity is an important success factor, and it is sometimes difficult to achieve, especially in relation to ESF-funded initiatives. Many find it hard to ensure funding when ESF runs out. Therefore, initiatives should think about this from the outset. Another example of bad practice is when initiatives initiated by one government are discontinued by new governments when they come to power. NOI in Portugal is an example of this. It was strongly supported by EU funds only for policy to be changed when the government changed in 2010. Skills for Life, though funded nationally, suffered a similar fate.

Further examples in the adult learning sector: can be found in the 2010 country reports on the Action Plan on Adult Learning: http://ec.europa.eu/education/adult/studies_en.htm

Evaluation experience

An [evaluation of the use of ESF to support LLL](#) during the programming periods 2000-2006 and 2007-2013 was published last autumn. It focuses on three target groups: young job seekers (up to 24 years old), low skilled workers (maximum qualification ISCED 2) and older workers (55+). As these target groups will continue to be integral in the European lifelong learning policies, some of the suggestions and recommendations listed in the case studies provide good feedback for the future programming period.

- Strong link between the programme activities and local needs important, including effective dialogue with local private sector (IT)
- Understanding the needs of the target group crucial (IT)
- Suggestion: requiring a feasibility study & introducing indicators of the progress achieved (IT)
- Most important factors for the success of LLL projects were well-prepared staff and professional teaching methods, whereas bad targeting, short duration and lack of practical exercises influenced negatively the success of the projects (PL)
- Important to consider the sustainability of the projects once ESF funding has ended to avoid the disappearance of successful projects (NL)
- Good coordination between different stakeholders important as well as low administrative burden (ES)
- Focus should be on the development of organisations dealing with the target group to enhance the sustainability of projects (SE)
- Focusing on preventative activities also important (SE)

Furthermore, one of the recommendations of the evaluation study was to cater for a better targeted assistance to older workers in the new programme in the light of the future importance and growth of this group.

5. Information sources

- Rethinking Education country specific data and information
 - [Education and Training Monitor 2012](#)
 - [Rethinking Education - Country analysis](#)
- Cedefop – Bruges Monitoring – Trends in VET policy 2010-2012 - http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/EN/Files/6116_en.pdf
- Apprenticeships supply in the Member States of the European Union http://ec.europa.eu/education/vocational-education/doc/forum12/supply_en.pdf
- Study on a comprehensive overview on traineeship arrangements in Member States <http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=738&langId=en&pubId=6717>
- ReferNet country reports - <http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/EN/Information-services/vet-in-europe-country-reports.aspx>
- OECD reports on VET (Learning for Jobs, Skills Beyond School) - http://www.oecd.org/edu/highereducationandadultlearning/oecdpolicyreviewsofvocational_educationandtrainingvet.htm
- Eurobarometer on VET – perception on VET in EU countries – including country sheets - http://ec.europa.eu/education/news/20110930_en.htm

- Case studies related to the ESF evaluation:
<http://portal.empl.cec/Management/evaluation/evaluation/esf/Evaluation/2007%20-%202013/Evaluation%20of%20the%20ESF%20support%20to%20Lifelong%20Learning/ESF%20Case%20Studies%20-%20Lifelong%20Learning.pdf>
- Dedicated website Literacy: www.ec.europa.eu/education/literacy
- Eurypedia adult learning systems in Europe:
https://webgate.ec.europa.eu/fpfis/mwikis/eurydice/index.php/Adult_Education_and_Training
- OECD website on PIAAC:
<http://www.oecd.org/education/highereducationandadultlearning/piaacprogrammefortheinternationalassessmentofadultcompetencies.htm> (data available as of October 2013)