



European VET for the 21st century: the balancing of excellence and inclusion

WA2: Excellence and inclusion – concept exploration and inclusion in
national VET objectives

October 2024

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Aims and research questions



To allow for an in-depth comparison of the concepts of vocational excellence and inclusion as well as a systematic elaboration of how these concepts are translated into practical policies, thus illustrating potential conflicts and complementarities in their realization.

1. How are the concepts of excellence and inclusion understood at national level?
2. Which instruments are used to promote excellence and inclusion at national level?
3. How do the conceptualisation and comprehension of these concepts vary across Europe?
4. Which future scenarios for the promotion and balancing of excellence and inclusion could be developed?

Scope, demarcation and link to WA1: time frame and country selection



- **Time frame** for analysis: past 25 years, next 10 years
- **Country selection:** Austria, Bulgaria, Germany, Finland, Lithuania, the Netherlands, Portugal, and Slovenia
- **Sources** to be used for exploring: national policy documents and beyond:
 - Strategy/action plan or similar
 - Regulation/legislation
 - Practical measure/Initiative
 - Research studies, specific projects and approaches by schools and even – if relevant – VET school level policies and programmes
 - Stakeholders and experts will have to be consulted
- Study time frame: until February 2026.



Analytical Framework for WA2

1. Where are the concepts of excellence' and 'inclusion' used and by whom? -> policy trails
2. How can different occurrences (episodes) of the concepts be described and analysed? -> Tools to describe and analyse the use of concepts 'excellence' and 'inclusion'
 - Dimensions and signals (based on the three-perspective model)
 - Justification of VET
3. What are scenarios for the future use of the concepts -
>Analytical approach to develop future scenarios

Policy trails

- When and in which context are the concepts used?
- Who uses the term excellence and inclusion and in which context?
- What underlying concept is implied by the use of the concepts?
- How does the use differ over time?

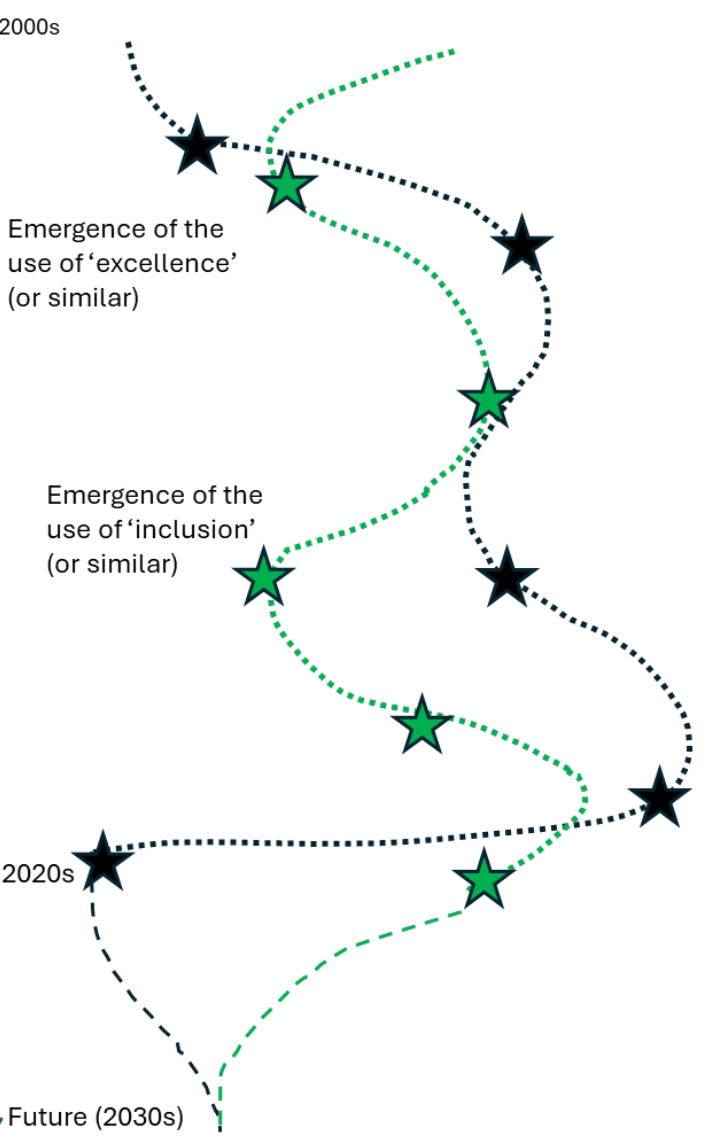




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*The focus is on how the policies and instruments are **connected to excellence and inclusion.***

In other words, we do not look for causal links between policies and system changes, but apply an abductive approach, connecting the 'dots' between actors and sites and concepts/policy initiatives referred to.

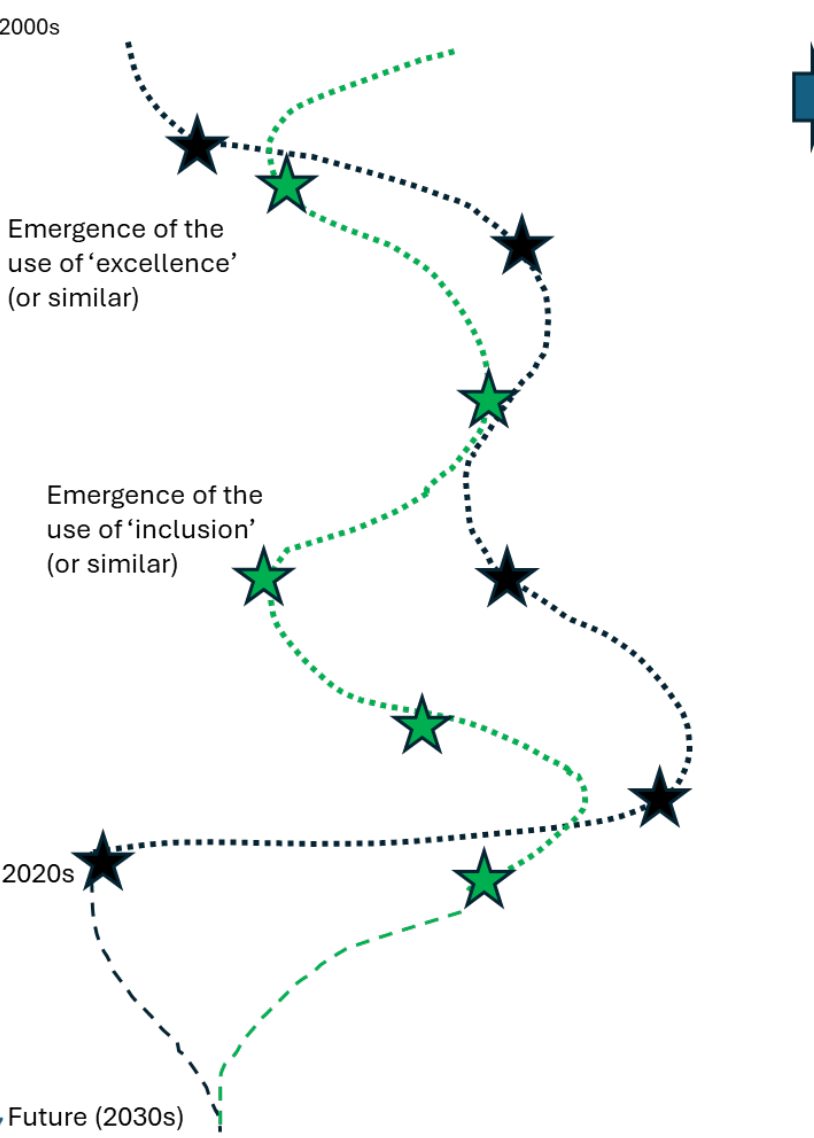
*In this way, we will be able to indicate in **different episodes** within the given timeframe (2000-2024) whether and how the concepts of excellence and inclusion are used in the national VET discourse, what intended meaning these concepts have for different stakeholders and in different sites (i.e. which aspects are emphasised) and which instruments are used to promote excellence and inclusion).*

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Describe the use of excellence and inclusion (for a specific episode)

Education system perspective

- Role of VET in the overall education and training system:
- Relation of VET and GE at programme and institutional level
- Type of providers and their autonomy
- Currency of VET qualifications in the labour market and the education system

Socioeconomic perspective

- Approach to research and technology
- Type and use of Skills and Knowledge
- Governance and funding
- Learner status and target groups

Epistemological and pedagogical perspective

- Knowledge approach and acquisition
- Teaching approaches and role of teachers
- Assessment approaches
- Role of general and civic content
- Learning formats and contexts

The operationalisations of signals are intended to support country researchers to describe the use of excellence and inclusion in the national contexts.

With the table at hand, they have a tool to analyse what the use of the terms excellence and inclusion might imply in relation to the different dimensions (for instance the role of VET in the whole E&T system).

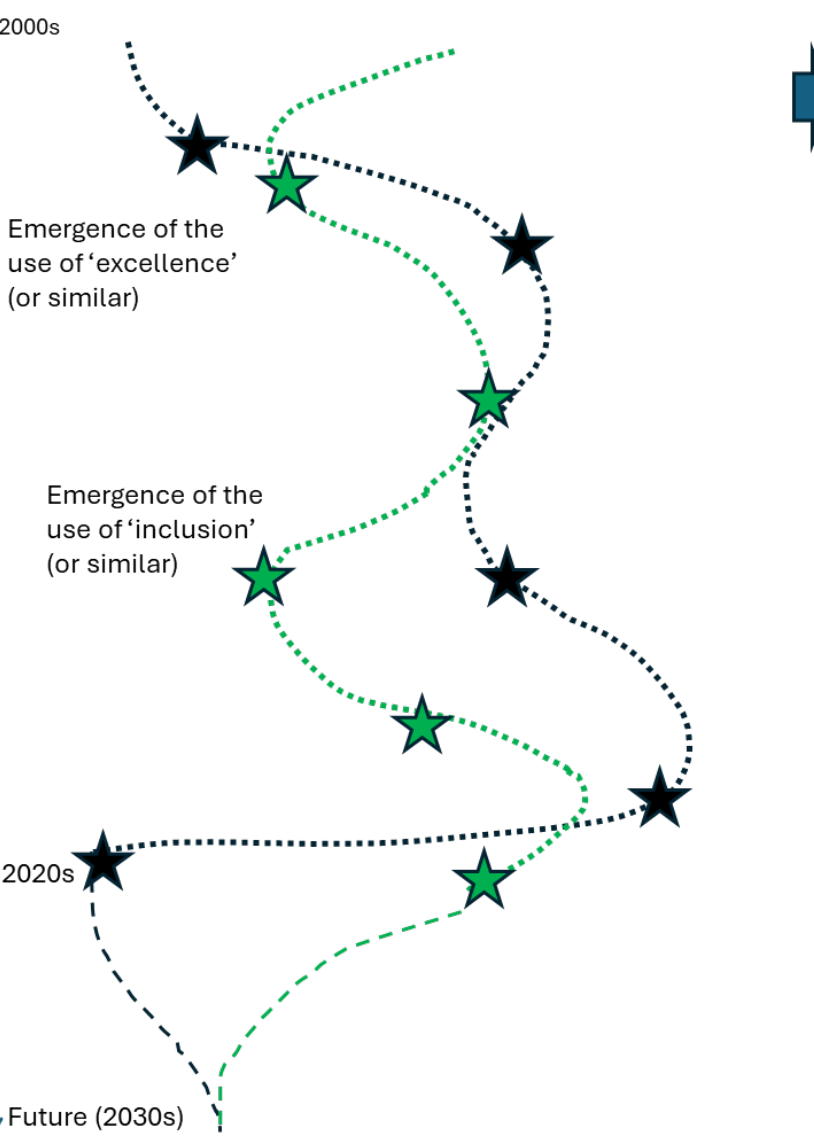
The table with dimensions is in that regard not intended to be a normative framework, but a heuristic tool.

Dimensions	Aspects of excellence	Aspects of inclusion
Education system perspective		
D: Role of VET in the overall education and training system: 1. Education system aims 2. Quality criteria and values 3. Parity of esteem / VET status	The use of 'excellence' might imply that VET focuses on people with a high chance of excelling in the concerning field or skill. This includes training of a smaller number of people, high entry requirements for the education and delivering highly skilled and specialised graduates. The VET providers have high quality criteria and focus on their output. Consequently, the status of VET is very high (at least equal to other E&T systems).	The use of 'inclusion' might imply that VET aims to provide for as large a group of people as possible. Its intention is to provide society with a large group of people with a basic vocational education. VET aims refer to being accessible for all learners for which VET might be relevant. Quality criteria and values cover inclusiveness. VET provides education for the most vulnerable group of learners. VET supports diverse groups of learners and preliminary aims to support vulnerable groups and people/learners with fewer opportunities to develop their potential in order to provide them with a basis for participating in society and the labour market. The status of VET in this aspect is low.
D: Relation of VET and GE at programme and institutional level 4. Organisation of VET / GE at programme level 5. Organisation of VET / GE at institutional level 6. Coordination education & work at provider level 7. Coordination education & work at system level	The use of 'excellence' might imply that VET requires its learners to have enjoyed a basic education prior to entering VET, in order to train them onto excellence. Therefore, the relation between GE and VET is well defined and complementary. The relation to GE and the labour market are key components of working on excellence.	The use of 'inclusion' might imply that VET has a specific role to be accessible for learners that might not be supported in other E&T systems in the countries. In relation to GE, VET has a specific role in relation to inclusion of specific target groups (including low-performers).
D: Type of providers and their autonomy	The use of 'excellence' might imply that autonomy is a key component for the excellence aspect of	The use of 'inclusion' might imply that general regulations exist that VET providers must follow in

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- Interpreting the policy trails - Justification of VET**
- Market
 - Industry
 - Craft (Domestic)
 - Civic
 - Inspiration
 - Public opinion (fame-based)
 - Project:

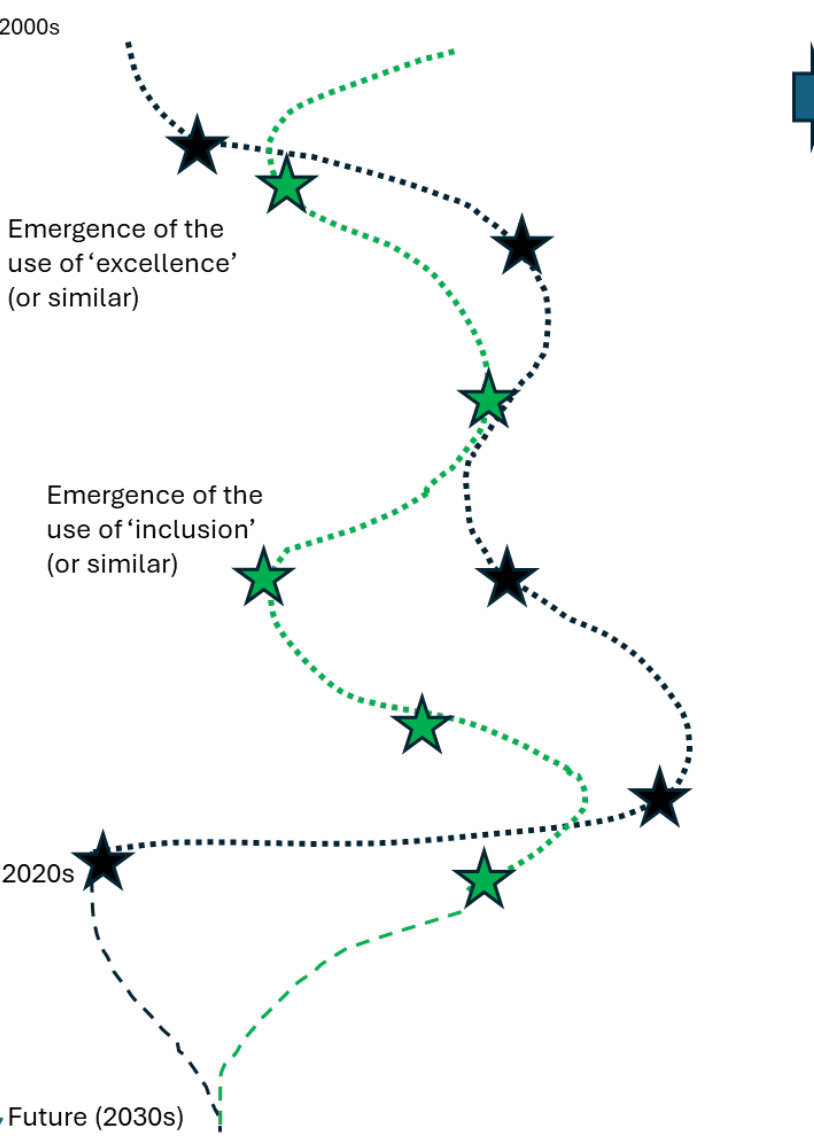
Convention / Order of Justification (*)	Coordination principle of VET	Quality Claim	Vocational education and imparted legitimate knowledge	Excellence and inclusion
Market: Market-based justification in VET refers to cost effectively 'producing' graduates in occupations which are much demanded on the labour market.	Price, Exchange	Competitiveness	Cost effective education of demanded skills	Mostly associated with excellence: providing the right skills for the labour market.
Industry: The justification that follows the industrial principle of efficiency is oriented toward conveying practical skills.	Practicability, efficiency, expertise, innovation	Efficiency	Transfer of applied knowledge (know-how, savoir faire)	More linked to excellence, but also to inclusion in the sense that quantity of qualified people is also a matter of inclusion: VET needs to find and train sufficient number of (young) people for industry.
Craft (Domestic): The justification that follows the domestic principle supports the education of junior staff with loyalty to the company and the sector.	Trust (community)	Reputation, Dexterity	Education based on respect, trust and loyalty (savoir être)	Linked to both excellence and inclusion, in the sense that the company and sector will also take care of long-term societal perspectives of caring for those in need.
Civic: The justification that follows the civic principle orients the educational system to not only conveys employment relevant knowledge for a few students but fosters broad, socially relevant general knowledge under the consideration of equality of opportunity when it comes to allocating training positions.	Principles of Equality Participation	Collective Claims, legal protection	Education is open to everybody, transfer of general knowledge (knowledge, savoir)	This justification is more linked to inclusion as it aims to provide an educational framework for all.
Inspiration: The justification that follows the inspiration principle, by way of their vocation, links the employees to their profession.	Free circulation / Vocation	Creativity	Vocation for education that fosters passion and creativity	This justification is firstly linked to excellence, but can be associated with inclusion as well as a way to spark passion and interest of those that fit less well in traditional E&T systems.
Public opinion (fame-based): The justification that follows the organising principle is associated with being visible and of good reputation.	Mediation / public opinion	Visibility, Popularity	Visible education of good reputation	This justification is mostly linked to excellence as it is about developing a high esteem of the VET system and showing that VET delivers highly qualified workers. However, it can also include traces of inclusion as it could also show that VET is able to bring all learners (at all levels) to a quality outcome.
Project (*) : The justification that follows the project principle indicates that VET is organised more flexible allowing mobility and exchange between work organisations.	Network	Flexibility, Openness	Flexibility, open education that fosters mobility	This justification is can be linked to both excellence and inclusion opening up pathways for non-traditional learners and finding individual routes towards obtaining the right skills.



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- Future scenarios**
- What are general scenarios for VET in 2035 (previous scenario studies)?
 - What do these scenarios mean in terms of excellence and inclusion?
 - What direction do the policy trails and justification point towards at national level?
 - What could be scenarios in which excellence and inclusion develop?

*In developing a scenario, there are two core elements:
 Firstly, the description of an end-state is needed. This means that the scenario projects potential future states at a given time period (for instance 2035).
 Secondly, the scenario develops per potential future state a storyline explaining how this future state came about.*



Research methodology

Two main 'Activities':

- Country case studies
 - Desk research at national level
 - Expert interviews
 - Case study write-up and quality assurance
- Analysis of country case studies and development of scenario
 - Comparison of national approaches
 - Internal workshop
 - Development of scenarios
 - Workshop with broader audience