

# The challenge of reviewing and renewing VET qualifications

How can we strengthen the feed-back-loop between the labour market (and demand for skills) and the VET system (provision of skills)?

**Simon Broek**  
Ockham-IPS, Netherlands

**Karin Luomi-Messerer**  
3s, Austria

**Jiří Braňka**  
Cedefop

Cedefop Workshop, 27.11.2020



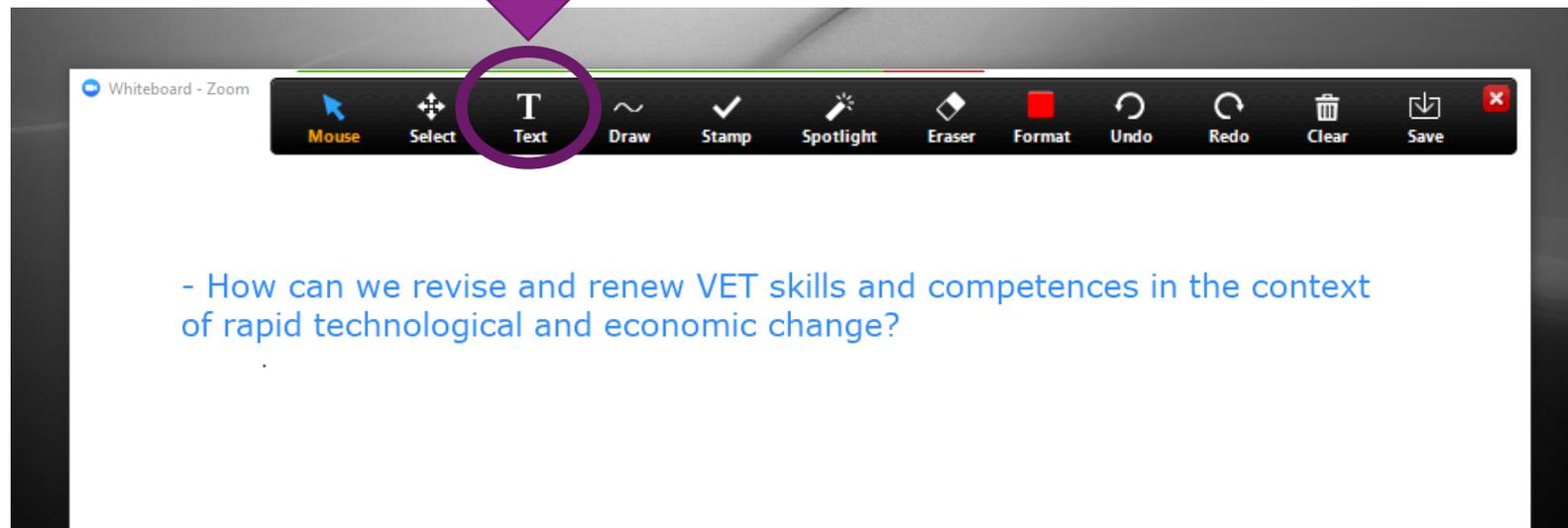
# Live interaction tools for our discussion...

- 1) For the polls, please go to [www.slido.com](http://www.slido.com) & enter event code #44076

- 2) Whiteboard

Use the text box feature to insert your ideas/comments etc.



# Comparing VET qualifications: towards a European Comparative Methodology

## Overall aims:

- scale up, strengthen and develop methodologies allowing for systematic and regular international comparisons of the content and profile of VET qualifications
- **strengthening quality and relevance of VET qualifications**

## Link:

<https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/events-and-projects/projects/comparing-vet-qualifications>

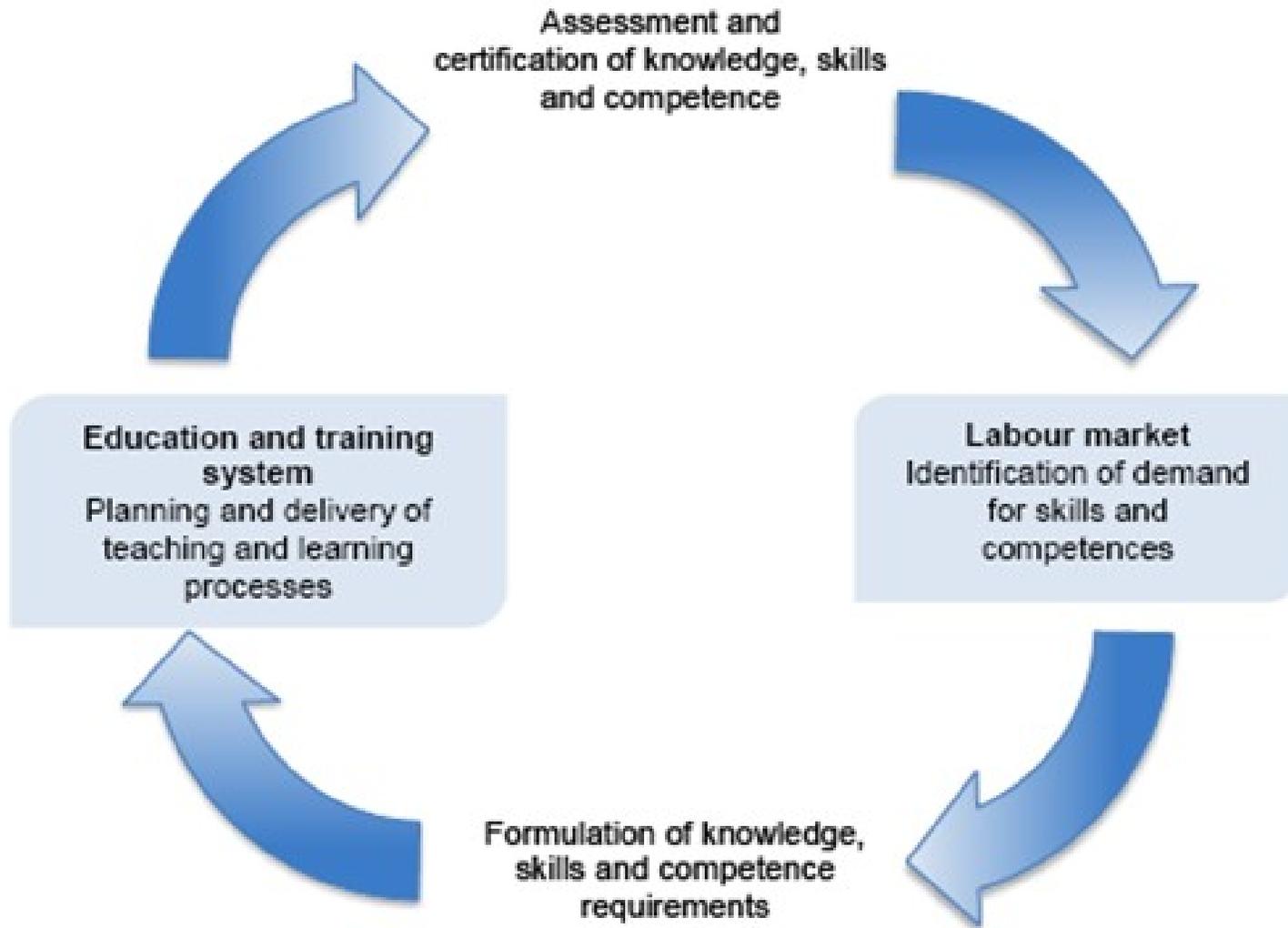


# Supporting quality, relevance and excellence of VET qualifications



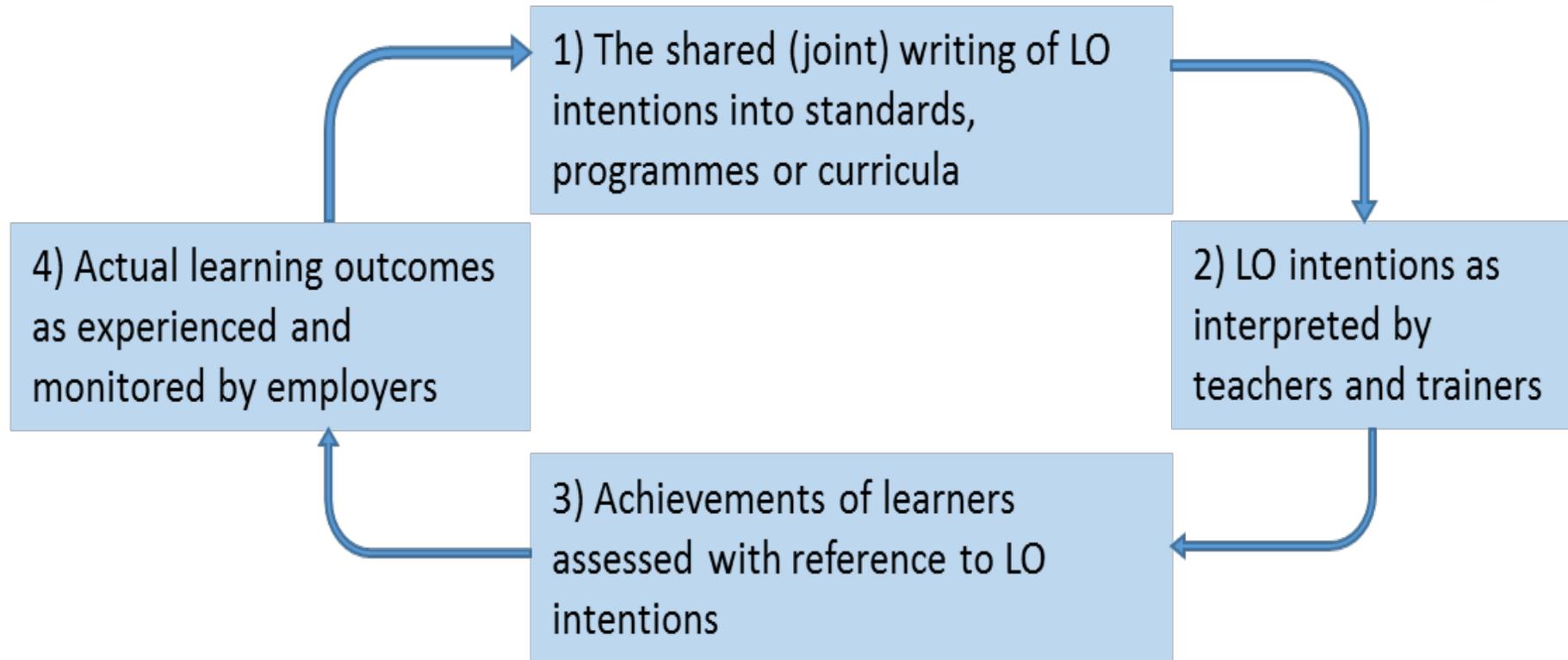
- comparison of VET qualifications and their **intended learning outcomes** (as documented in qualifications descriptions): mutual learning – inspiration, starting point for improving and further developing VET qualifications
- could be complemented by an analysis of how the *intentions* of the education and training system match the *expectations* and *needs* of employees and employers in a given context, and to what extent they are satisfied with the **achieved learning outcomes** (as applied in the work context) – e.g. by collecting feedback from employers

# Basic model of feedback mechanism between VET and labour market



Cedefop (2013). *Renewing VET provision. Understanding feedback mechanisms between initial VET and the labour market.* Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union.

# Learning outcomes feedback loop



- Which data sources/methods exist to illustrate the match between the intentions of the VET system and the demands of the labour market?
- To what extent can they contribute to 'completing' the feedback loop?

# Data sources explored & preliminary conclusions



## Data sources explored:

- Skill mismatch analyses and the European Skills & Jobs Survey
- **Vacancy analyses and Cedefop's Skills Online Vacancy Analysis Tool for Europe (Skills-OVATE)**
- Forecasting approaches and Cedefop's skills forecast
- ET graduate tracking surveys
- **Employer Reflection Surveys**

## Preliminary conclusion:

- Valuable sources for the creation of skills intelligence
- Rarely relate to individual qualifications or consider actual learning outcomes as they are realised and perceived in the labour market
- Potential for completing the feedback loop based on learning outcomes?



**CEDEFOP**

European Centre  
for the Development  
of Vocational Training

# Skills in online job vacancies

## Skills OVATE

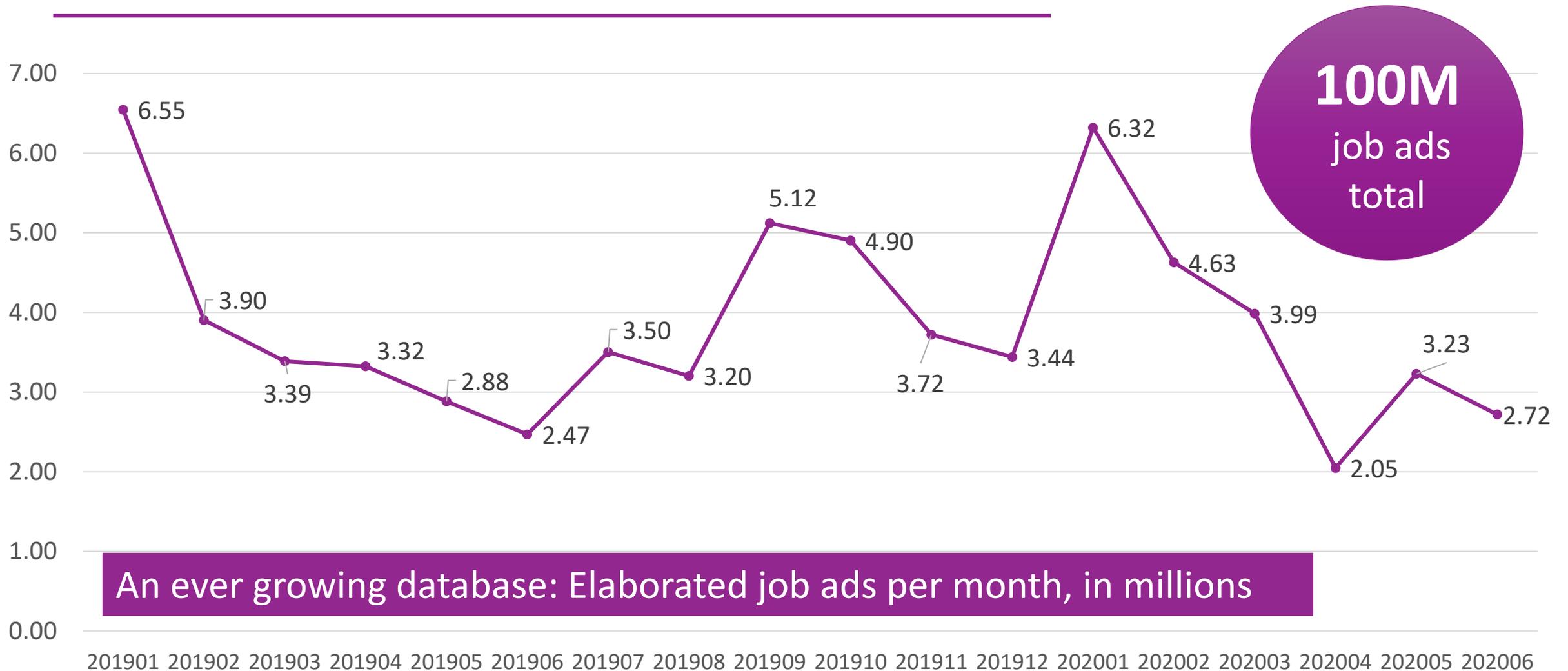
**Jiří Braňka**

Cedefop

<https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/events-and-projects/projects/skills-online-job-vacancies>

# Skills in online job advertisements:

A feedback loop tool?



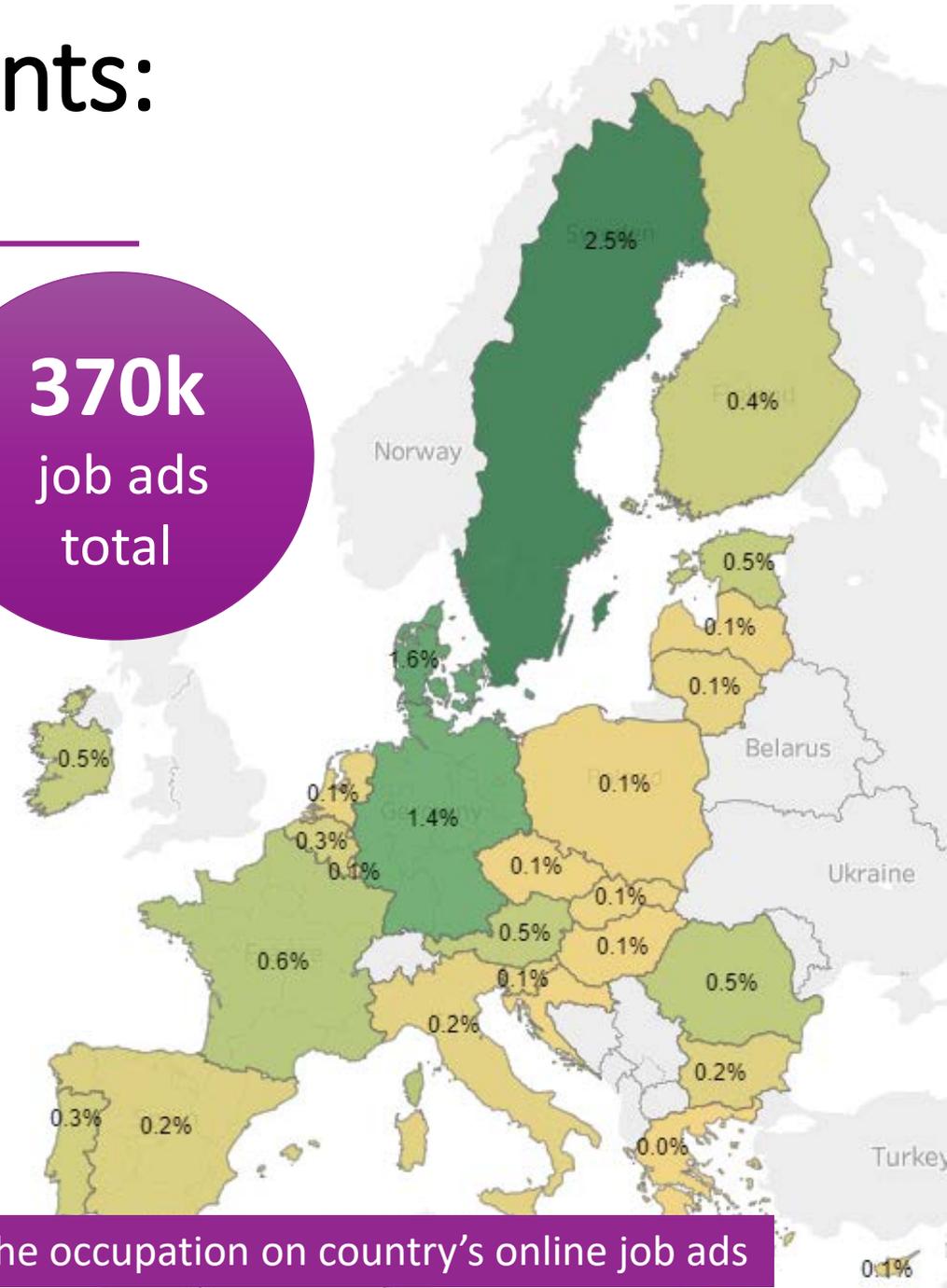
# Skills in online job advertisements:

Health care assistant (ISCO 5321)

- Online job ads: voluntary, subjective reporting
  - Different uses and practices across EU countries
  - Recruitment strategy of an employer and expected skills shortages influence the job ad
  - Abundance of candidates: job ads tend to inflate requirements and vice versa
  - Paid by an employer: the longer the ad, the higher the costs
  - Which skills in a job ad? Those making a difference or difficult to hire
  - Skills easily trained on the job not important to advertise, even if they are essential
- 
- **SOJAs can only be a support tool in the feedback loop**

**370k**  
job ads  
total

Share of the occupation on country's online job ads

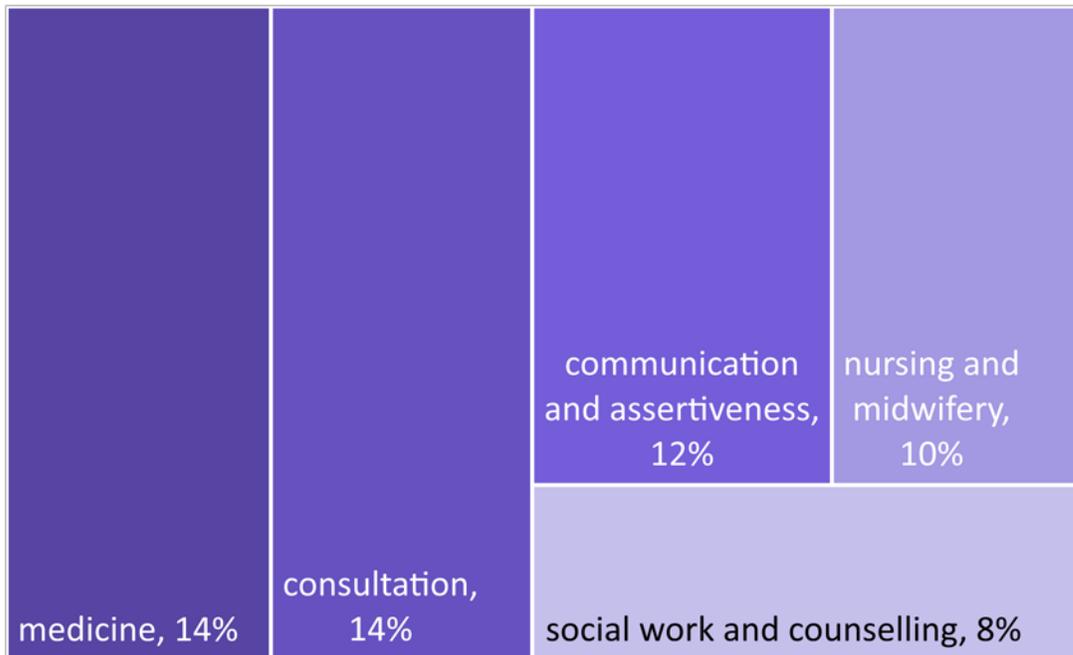


# Skills of a Health care assistant (ISCO 5321):

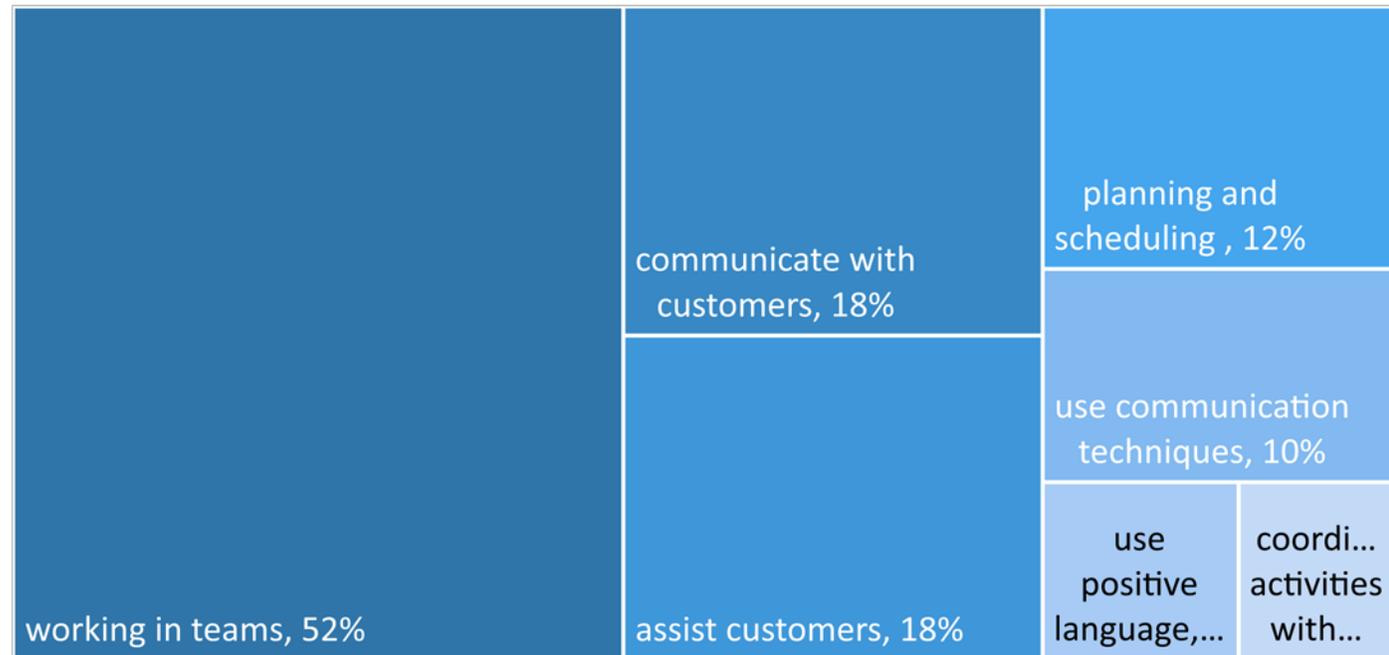
## Attitudes and values



## Knowledge



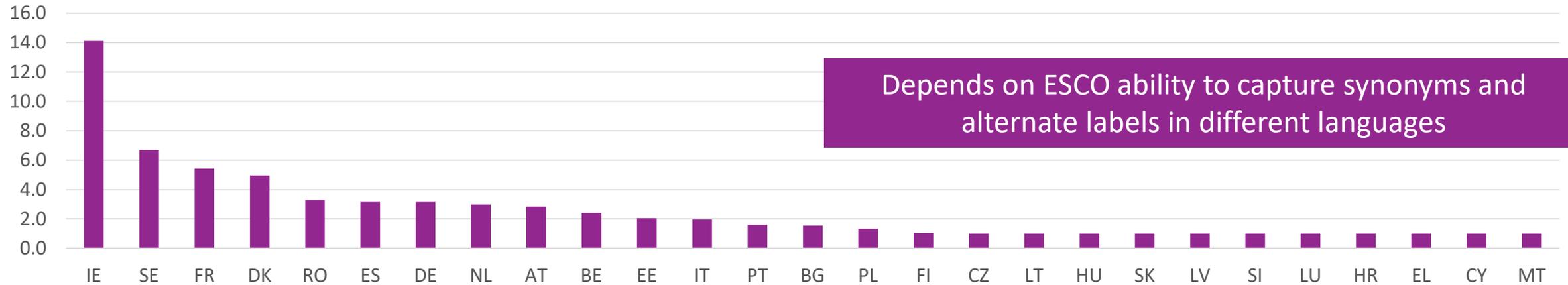
## Skills



# Skills of a Health care assistant (ISCO 5321)

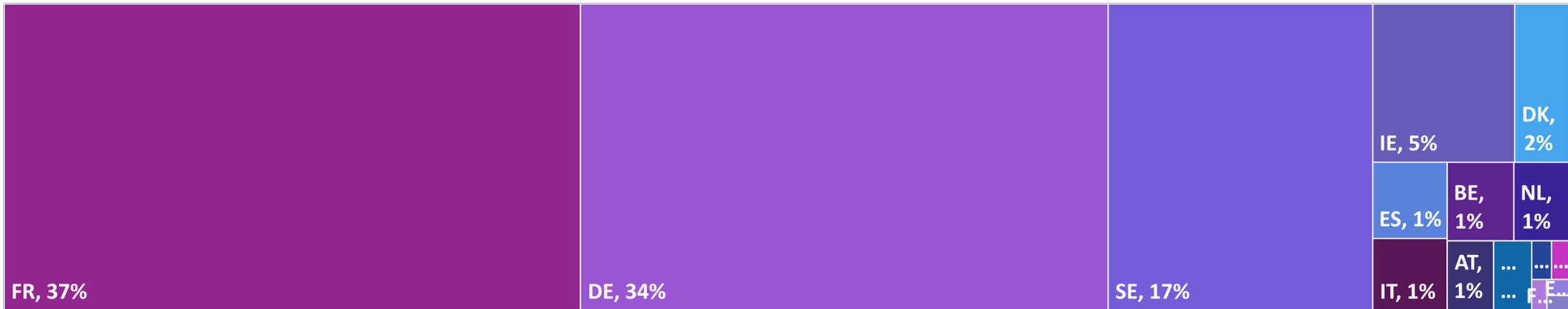
Across countries:

AVERAGE NUMBER OF TERMS PER 1 JOB AD



Depends on ESCO ability to capture synonyms and alternate labels in different languages

SHARE ON TOTAL NUMBER OF TERMS IN JOB ADS PER COUNTRIES



# Employer Reflection Surveys (ERS)

**Simon Broek**  
Ockham-IPS, Netherlands

Results from the 3<sup>rd</sup> part of the 'Comparing VET qualifications' project on 'Exploring, gathering and analysing data on the match/mismatch between qualifications and labour market requirements'

# Overview ERS in Europe and beyond

**Focus on 'Employer reflection surveys with reference to learning outcomes included in qualifications'**

In ten countries (AT, BG, DK, ES, FI, FR, IE, LT, NL, UK-EN) we found six examples in AT, IE, ES, LT, NL and an elaborate Australian approach.

From the exploration the following findings emerged:

- Five of the national experts stated that ERS are regarded as useful in their country.
- In some of the countries, the national expert questioned whether such ERS would at all be useful and desirable in their country contexts.
- One could argue that the need to have ERS is limited in systems where there are strong governance and system links between the labour market and the VET system.
- The ERS might therefore be more relevant for Member States where the VET system is operating within a relative 'arms-length' of the labour market.



# Approach to piloting an ERS

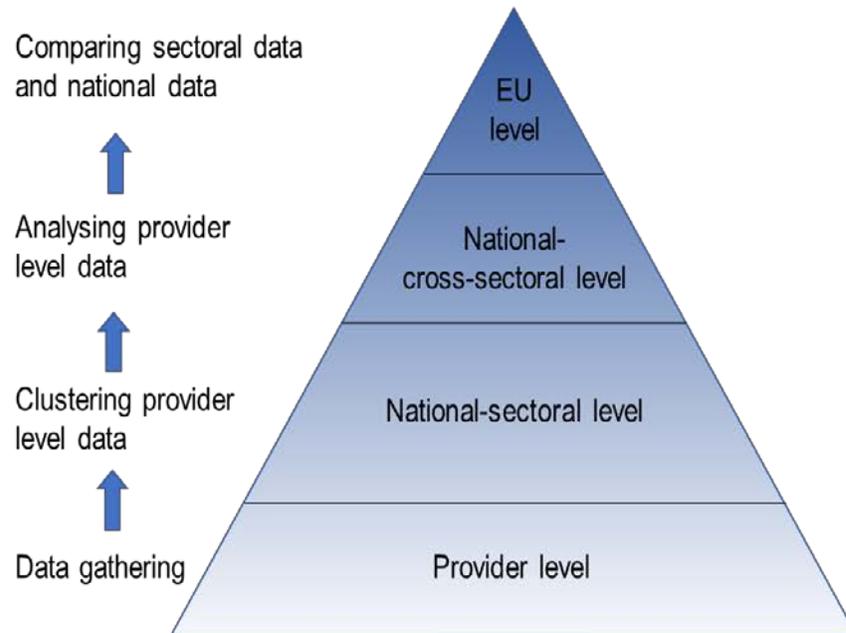
## Objective:

- to support VET providers to better match their offers with the needs of their direct labour market stakeholders.
- the ERS prototype is not an accountability tool but rather a tool to initiate a dialogue between VET providers and employers (and graduates).
- the data collections should allow aggregation of the data to sectoral, national and cross-national levels.



*Inspired by the EC JRS  
SELFIE approach*

### The objectives of an ESS approach are:



4: to compare different VET systems in how employers assess the achieved learning outcomes.

3: to generally see tendencies at national level how employers value the VET system in providing specific sets of learning outcomes.

2: to identify sectoral emerging needs in terms of learning outcomes.

1: to support VET providers to better align their provision to the needs of their direct labour market stakeholders.

### 2 profiles

- *healthcare assistant*
  - *ICT service technician*
- 2 countries: NL and LT



# The workflow of the ERS

- **Step 1: VET provider**
  - Select VET providers
    - The VET provider filled in questionnaire for VET provider
- **Step 2: Inviting graduates and employers**
  - The VET provider sent the link to the questionnaire to the graduates.
    - Graduates filled in questionnaire for graduates
  - The VET provider compiled a list of employers that potentially hired graduates from the programme and sent the invitation-link
    - Employers filled in questionnaire for employers.
- **Step 3: Interviews and dialogue**
  - The researchers interviewed employers to reflect on their experience with the survey.

1. In relation to each skill, to what extent do you believe that the VET programme has provided them to the graduate for effective work in a company/organisation?

**I believe the VET programme provided this skill...**

- (a) Not at all
- (b) To some extent
- (c) To a moderate extent
- (d) To a large extent
- (e) To a very large extent
- (f) Not applicable

2. From the list of skills, please select the **five most important and the five least important ones**.

**A. General occupation-related skills and competences as exercised in the workplace**

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| 1) Applying professional knowledge to job tasks | 4) Maintaining professional standards       |
| 2) Using technology effectively                 | 5) Observing ethical standards              |
| 3) Applying technical skills in the workplace   | 6) Using research skills to gather evidence |

**B. Specific occupation-related skills and competences as exercised in the workplace**

For ICT service technician:

- 1) Provide technical documentation
- 2) Perform ICT troubleshooting
- 3) Use repair manuals
- 4) Configure ICT system
- 5) Administer ICT system
- 6) Maintain ICT server /system
- 7) Perform backups
- 8) Repair ICT devices
- 9) Implement ICT recovery system
- 10) Manage ICT legacy implication
- 11) Use precision tools

For Healthcare assistant

- 1) Monitor basic patients' signs
- 2) Communicate with nursing staff
- 3) Empathise with the healthcare user
- 4) Interact with healthcare users
- 5) Provide basic support to patients
- 6) Identify abnormalities
- 7) Support nurses
- 8) Ensure safety of healthcare users
- 9) Convey medical routine information
- 10) Manage healthcare users' data
- 11) Conduct cleaning tasks

*these lists of 10-15 items are based on the learning outcomes mapping conducted in WA1. The ESCO KSCs are selected that: are included in many countries (at least 8 out of the 10); are not already covered in the full list (i.e. they are occupation-specific skills)*

**C. Teamwork and interpersonal skills as exercised in the workplace**

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| 1) Working well in a team and working collaboratively with colleagues to complete tasks    | 4) Ability to follow instructions         |
| 2) Getting on well with others in the workplace and understanding different points of view | 5) Ability to instruct and/or lead others |
| 3) Ability to interact with co-workers from different or multicultural backgrounds         | 6) Ability to handle conflicts            |

**D. Employability and enterprise skills as exercised in the workplace**

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| 1) Ability to work under pressure  | 8) Demonstrating initiative in the workplace and show sense of initiative |
| 2) Reflect work processes and procedures   | 9) Ability to solve problems  |
| 3) Capacity to be flexible in the workplace                                      | 10) Oral communication skills   |
| 4) Ability to meet deadlines   | 11) Written communication skills  |
| 5) Understanding the nature of your business or organisation                     | 12) Foreign language skills   |
| 6) Ability to manage processes/ projects   | 13) Working with numbers  |
| 7) Taking responsibility for personal professional development (keep up to date) | 14) Persistence and endurance   |
|  | 15) Critically reflect on own role and place in society                   |

# Results of the pilot: healthcare assistant in Tilburg (NL)

Characterisation of the healthcare assistant level 3 programme by the VET provider



Most (green) and least (orange) important skills

Level at which the skills was provided (low, medium, high). The greener the higher

Skills are recognised in the graduate (not at all – large extent)

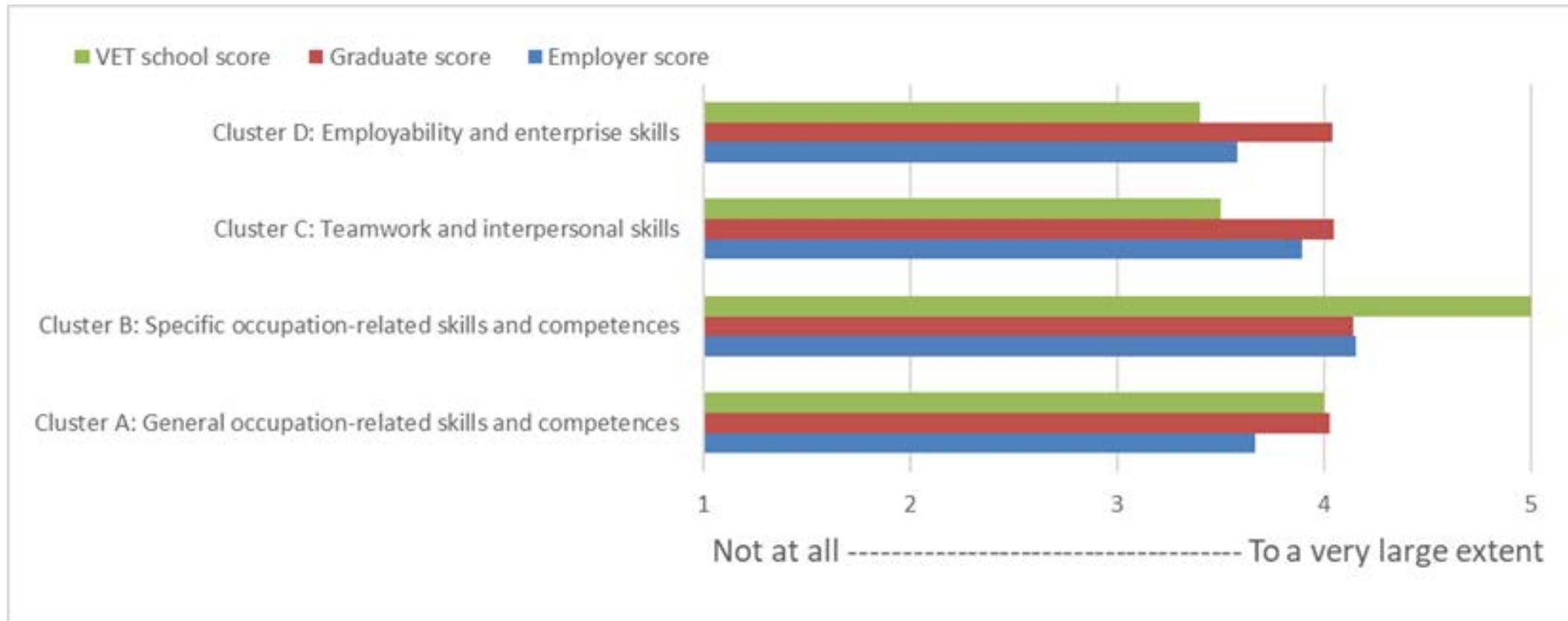
	Skills (and indication of priority (most and least important))	The VET programme provided the skill at...	Skills are recognised in the graduate (by VET provider) (1=not at all; 5 = to a very large extent; 0 = not applicable)
Cluster A: General occupation-related skills and competences	1) Applying professional knowledge to job tasks	(b) the sufficient level enabling autonomous execution of the work tasks with some supervision and quality control	5
	2) Using technology effectively	(b) the sufficient level enabling autonomous execution of the work tasks with some supervision and quality control	3
	3) Applying technical skills in the workplace	(b) the sufficient level enabling autonomous execution of the work tasks with some supervision and quality control	3
	4) Maintaining professional standards	(a) the basic level enabling work with intensive supervision, assistance and guidance of more experienced employee	5
	5) Observing ethical standards	(b) the sufficient level enabling autonomous execution of the work tasks with some supervision and quality control	4
	6) Using research skills to gather evidence	(b) the sufficient level enabling autonomous execution of the work tasks with some supervision and quality control	4
Cluster B: Specific occupation-related skills and competences	1) Monitor basic patients' signs	(a) the basic level enabling work with intensive supervision, assistance and guidance of more experienced employee	5
	2) Communicate with nursing staff	(c) high level enabling completely independent execution of tasks by assuming the responsibility of their quality control	5
	3) Empathise with the healthcare user	(c) high level enabling completely independent execution of tasks by assuming the responsibility of their quality control	4
	4) Interact with healthcare users	(b) the sufficient level enabling autonomous execution of the work tasks with some supervision and quality control	4
	5) Provide basic support to patients	(c) high level enabling completely independent execution of tasks by assuming the responsibility of their quality control	5
	6) Identify abnormalities	(a) the basic level enabling work with intensive supervision, assistance and guidance of more experienced employee	4
	7) Support nurses	(c) high level enabling completely independent execution of tasks by assuming the responsibility of their quality control	5
	8) Ensure safety of healthcare users	(b) the sufficient level enabling autonomous execution of the work tasks with some supervision and quality control	4
	9) Convey medical routine information	(c) high level enabling completely independent execution of tasks by assuming the responsibility of their quality control	5
	10) Manage healthcare users' data	(c) high level enabling completely independent execution of tasks by assuming the responsibility of their quality control	5
	11) Conduct cleaning tasks	(b) the sufficient level enabling autonomous execution of the work tasks with some supervision and quality control	2
Cluster C: Teamwork and interpersonal skills	1) Working well in a team and working collaboratively with colleagues to complete tasks	NA	4
	2) Getting on well with others in the workplace and understanding different points of view	NA	4
	3) Ability to interact with co-workers from different or multicultural backgrounds	NA	2
	4) Ability to follow instructions	NA	4
	5) Ability to instruct and/or lead others	NA	4
	6) Ability to handle conflicts	NA	3
Cluster D: Employability and enterprise skills	1) Ability to work under pressure	NA	3
	2) Reflect work processes and procedures	NA	5
	3) Capacity to be flexible in the workplace	NA	4
	4) Ability to meet deadlines	NA	2
	5) Understanding the nature of your business or organisation	NA	4
	6) Ability to manage processes/ projects	NA	4
	7) Taking responsibility for personal professional development (keep up to date)	NA	4
	8) Demonstrating initiative in the workplace and show sense of initiative	NA	4
	9) Ability to solve problems	NA	3
	10) Oral communication skills	NA	3
	11) Written communication skills	NA	4
	12) Foreign language skills	NA	0
	13) Working with numbers	NA	4
14) Persistence and endurance	NA	3	
15) Critically reflect on own role and place in society	NA	4	

# Feedback-loop: reflections from employers and graduates ckham Institute for Policy Support

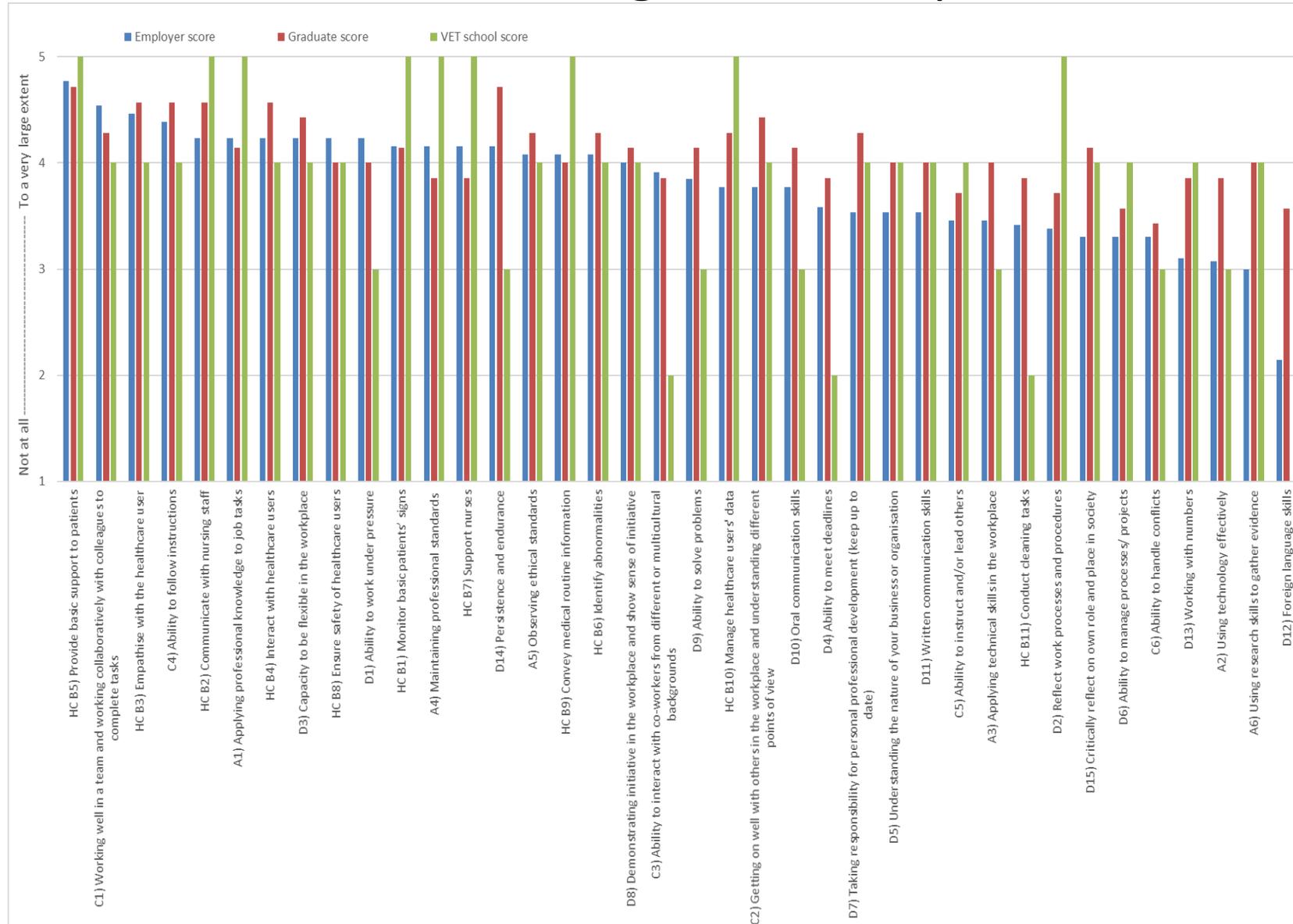
As a general overall assessment, the employers and graduates are positive concerning whether the VET programme prepared the graduate for his or her job.



## Clusters of skills provided by the VET programme (NL)



# ‘The VET programme has provided the graduates with the skills. I believe the graduate acquired this skill’ (NL)



## Employers and graduates more positive compared to the VET provider:

- C3) Ability to interact with co-workers from different or multicultural backgrounds
- D4) Ability to meet deadlines
- B11) Conduct cleaning tasks
- D14) Persistence and endurance

## Employers more negative compared to the VET provider:

- D2) Reflect work processes and procedures
- B10) Manage healthcare users' data
- D13) Working with numbers
- A6) Using research skills to gather evidence
- B9) Convey medical routine information

# Most important and least important learning outcomes NL Healthcare assistant



	Most important	Least important
<b>Employers</b>	C1) Working well in a team and working collaboratively with colleagues to complete tasks A1) Applying professional knowledge to job tasks D7) Taking responsibility for personal professional development (keep up to date) B1) Monitor basic patients' signs B5) Provide basic support to patients	D12) Foreign language skills D6) Ability to manage processes/ projects D4) Ability to meet deadlines B11) Conduct cleaning tasks D13) Working with numbers
<b>Graduates</b>	D1) Ability to work under pressure A1) Applying professional knowledge to job tasks C1) Working well in a team and working collaboratively with colleagues to complete tasks D7) Taking responsibility for personal professional development (keep up to date)	D12) Foreign language skills B11) Conduct cleaning tasks A3) Applying technical skills in the workplace
<b>VET provider</b>	A1) Applying professional knowledge to job tasks A5) Observing ethical standards B3) Empathise with the healthcare user C1) Working well in a team and working collaboratively with colleagues to complete tasks D15) Critically reflect on own role and place in society	A2) Using technology effectively B11) Conduct cleaning tasks D4) Ability to meet deadlines D5) Understanding the nature of your business or organisation D12) Foreign language skills

- *There is an overall high level of satisfaction among the employers and the graduates concerning the learning outcomes provided by the VET provider.*
- *Nonetheless, there are learning outcomes that need further reflection and discussion between the employers, graduates and the VET provider in terms of whether they are sufficiently acquired during the programme and/or related to their importance.*

# Challenges and lessons learned

1. **The pilot faced severe challenges in reaching out to employers and graduates.**
  1. Reaching out to graduates required VET providers to have a functioning alumni-policy in which contact details of graduates are kept up to date;
  2. The route from graduates to employers (i.e. asking graduates to provide contact details of their supervisors) proved to be a dead-end in the pilot.
  3. Having an overview of employers hiring graduates is not a given, especially in sectors with many SMEs and high level of labour market dynamics (such as ICT).
2. **The questionnaires and the skills lists used in the pilot seem to be appropriate.**
3. **Despite the lack of data, the ERS approach is an interesting and promising approach to close the feedback-loop looking in detail at the content of qualifications.**
4. **There is too little data to establish a lesson learned about comparing the results for different qualification profiles and the results between countries.**



## NEXT STEPS:

- The piloted ERS approach is potentially scalable in terms of using the questionnaire for other qualification profiles, engaging other VET providers and offering different language versions.

# Overarching recommendations

It is recommended to:

- (a) **Integrate methods** to complete the feedback loop more strongly into VET governance and quality assurance procedures and structures.
- (b) **Combine different sources** for completing the feedback loop as all sources have their specific added value and advantage
- (c) Not only rely on national or system level feedback loops, but to strengthen **more direct feedback loops** between VET providers and their (local or regional) labour market stakeholders to improve quality assurance and curriculum renewal more directly.
- (d) to **further experiment** with the employer reflection survey methodology and try to set up an infrastructure inspired by the SELFIE 360-methodology.
  - (i) new countries;
  - (ii) more VET providers;
  - (iii) other qualification profiles;
  - (iv) Combine the testing with support to VET providers to develop policies on employer engagement and alumni policies;
  - (v) Combine the ERS outcomes at national or system level with information from other sources closing the feedback loop.



# Thank you!

**Karin Luomi-Messerer**

3s Unternehmensberatung GmbH

[luomi-messerer@3s.co.at](mailto:luomi-messerer@3s.co.at)

[www.3s.co.at](http://www.3s.co.at)



**Simon Broek**

Ockham-IPS, Netherlands

[s.broek@ockham-ips.nl](mailto:s.broek@ockham-ips.nl)

<https://ockham-ips.nl/>



For the polls, please go to [www.slido.com](http://www.slido.com)  
& enter event code #44076

## Poll question #1

In your country, are there arrangements sufficiently in place to assure that VET qualifications respond to changing labour market and societal needs?

