Key competences in initial vocational education and training

19-20 September 2019 Cedefop Thessaloniki

#KeyCompetences
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EUROPEAN VOCATIONAL SKILLS WEEK

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Overview and examples of main challenges discovered within the study: digital

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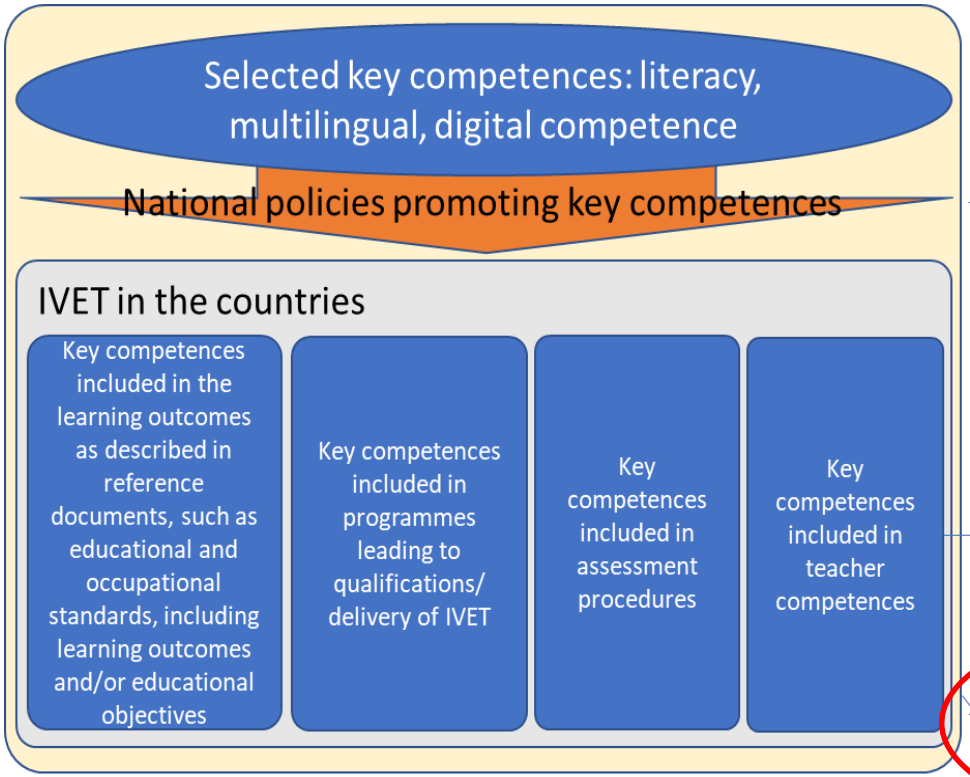
Conceptual overview



Policies: Determine what are characteristics of national policies promoting key competences in IVET

Key competences in IVET: Determine in which **areas** of the IVET system key competences can be found included

Determine the kind of **relationships** there can be between **policies** and **key competences inclusion in IVET**

The study looked at the objectives of the policies and whether these objectives were achieved

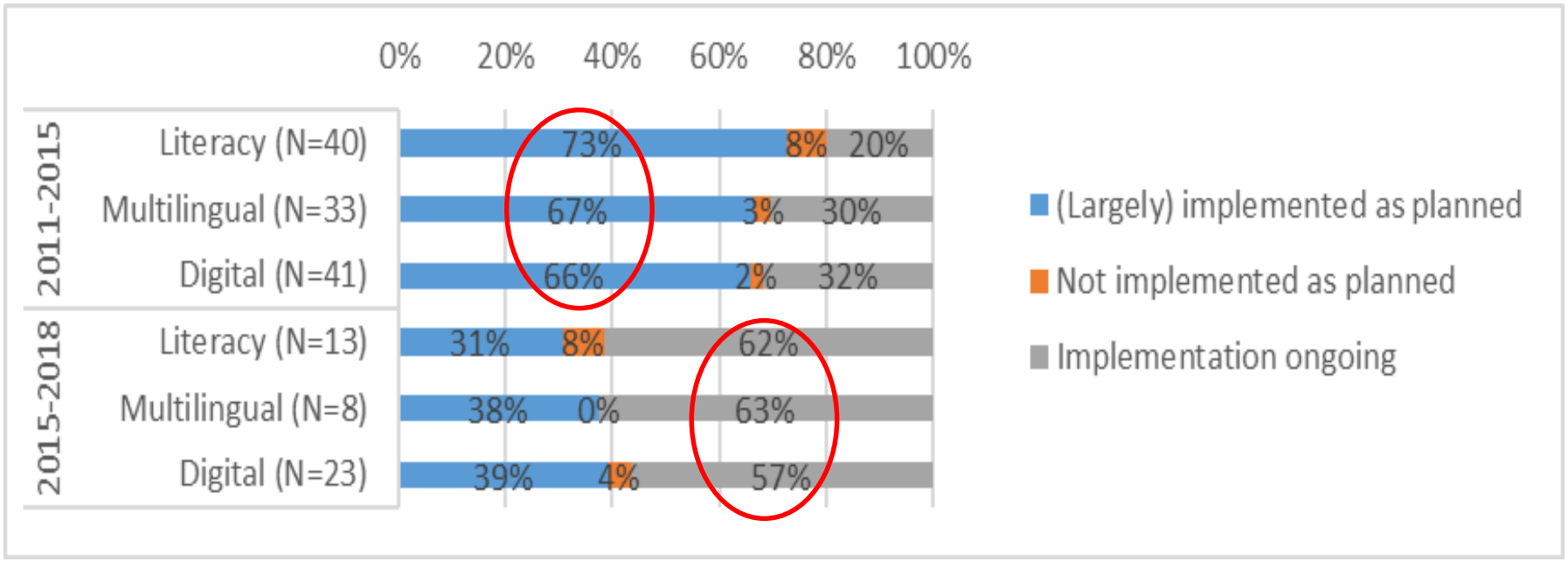
Note on effectiveness and success of policies

Any assessment of the effectiveness faces a number of structural challenges:

- Policies that promote the selected key competences differ on many accounts
- Studying key competences inclusion in IVET is challenging as IVET is a very heterogeneous sector (difference per sector, EQF level etc.)

Given the above, exactly determining the influence of policies on how specific key competences are included is challenging.

Implementation of policies 2011-2015 and 2016-2018



Policies that aim at embedding key competences in reference documents and assessment standards can take longer to reach results than policies focusing on programme delivery and teacher training.

Literature review on for policy challenges

Reasons for policy failure (McConnell, 2014; Lane & Hamann, 2003):

- policy is not able to meet original **objectives**;
- policy is not implemented **as intended**;
- policy does not benefit the **intended target group**;
- policy is **not able to meet criteria** highly valued in that policy sector.

- **Form and Content** not right
- **Policy Communication** not in place
- **Policy Implementation Capacities** not in place

Policies can also fail at different stages in **policy cycle**:

- Preparation
- Implementation
- Follow up and monitoring

Literature review on for policy challenges

Area of challenge Policy cycle	Context	Stakeholder engagement, commitment and ownership	Coordination, management and political priority	Resources	
Policy preparation and development					
Policy implementation (planning and conducting activities)					
Policy monitoring and follow-up					

Source: Authors based on McConnell (McConnell, 2014) and Lane & Hamann (Lane & Hamann, 2003).

Literature review on for policy challenges

Area of challenge Policy cycle	Context	Stakeholder engagement, commitment and ownership	Coordination, management and political priority	Resources
Policy preparation and development	Lack of quality data and analysis Not a good understanding of the problem the policy supposed to solve Policy not well aligned with other policies	Key stakeholders not involved in policy design and development; lack of ownership	Lack of effective coordination of key stakeholders	Lack of capacities on the topic in policy design and development
Policy implementation (planning and conducting activities)	Context appeared to be more challenging than expected Context changed while implementing	Key stakeholders are not (sufficiently) involved in the policy implementation The policy does not provide incentives for key stakeholders to implement the policy Lack of communication the policy to inform and involve stakeholders	Decreased political will and priority Lack of effective coordination of the implementation activities	Lack of capacities build among stakeholders to implement the policy Lack of financial resources
Policy monitoring and follow-up	No monitoring system in place to make changes to the policy and implementation No feedback loops between key stakeholders in the policy implementation			

Source: Authors based on McConnell (McConnell, 2014) and Lane & Hamann (Lane & Hamann, 2003).

Challenges in the context of this study

In the context of the study, challenges are defined as difficulties met in one or several project cycles due to contextual reasons and/or other reasons concerning stakeholder involvement, management and coordination and/or availability of resources.

Challenges does not mean that a policy failed!

In fact, challenges can be resolved within the timespan of the project and thus contribute to its success or improvement.

Case study approach for identifying challenges

While the study looked at challenges in all identified policies, **7 case studies** were conducted focusing on speciic challenges:

- BE FL: Content Language Integrated Leaning (CLIL)
- NL: Support measure 'quality arrangements VET'
- LV: Guidelines for Information Society Development 2014-2020
- HU: Digital Education Strategy
- RO: National Strategy for the Digital Agenda 2014-2020
- DE: Education in the digital world
- IE: Languages Connect 2017-2026

Main criteria for selecting the case studies were:

- policies that promoted one of the three key competences, but did not promote many other key competences (policies focusing on more than 4 key competences were excluded from selection);
- policies facing implementation challenges in at least one area of challenge;
- challenges in policy implementation are not solely related to budgetary constraints.

Case study approach for identifying challenges

Each case study was structured to consider the following issues:

- policy **objectives** related to implementation of the key competence in IVET;
- main **activity/policy actions** addressing the objective(s);
- **governance levels** and stakeholders involved;
- **areas of difficulty** in implementing the key competence, or no implementation;
- reason(s) for difficulties encountered;
- strategies for dealing with the difficulties;
- end result.

Based on the analysis of the case studies and identified challenges in all policies, the following list was created with challenges.

Overview of main challenges discovered in policies promoting key competences in IVET

Main challenges	Identified in
1. Policies covered **not only IVET**, or only have the promotion of key competences as a side objective among others causing that the success in terms of promoting key competences in IVET to be marginal or non-existent.	3 policies
2. Face challenges related to **complying with funding regulations** causing that (ESF) funding for policy implementation was disbursed with delay	2 policies
3. Require **more time** to reach their objectives than the scope of this study permits (complexities related to legislative arrangements)	2 policies
4. V**ague and abstract objectives** in relation to embed specific key competences in IVET (identified in at least 1 policy).	1 policy
5. Lack **clearly operationalised implementation plans** in relation to the objective to embed specific key competences in IVET making it difficult to monitor on results and impact	3 policies
6. Lack **human resources and support** for the implementation at VET school level	4 policies
7. Lack **effective coordination between stakeholders** in the implementation of policies	2 policies
8. insufficiently take into account **contextual factors** in the design of policies e.g. *uneven development in rural and urban areas in countries*	3 policies

Broader scope of policies e.g. going beyond IVET

- A considerable number of policies have a broad scope that extends well beyond the scope of this study. When assessing success in terms of promoting key competences in IVET then, results may be marginal or non-existent. However, this does not mean that such policies are by definition 'failed'.

- **Often the policies covered not only IVET, of only have the promotion of key competences as one (minor) objective among others**.

Broader scope of policies e.g. going beyond IVET

- The **Romanian National Strategy for the Digital Agenda 2014-2020** consisted of a wider range of objectives through which it seeks to raise the use of ICT and the level of ICT competences among citizens; its main aim is to ensure that '75% of the population uses regularly ICT by 2020'.

Dependence on external funding

- In Romania, the action plan in the education area related to the **National Strategy for the Digital Agenda 2014-2020** was delayed, especially because of the delays in the implementation of the operational programmes finance by European funds.

Dependence on external funding

- In Hungary the requirements of ESF-funded projects are mentioned as hindering the implementation by the complexity of administrative requirements of publishing calls for proposal.

Complexities related to legislative amendments

- The **Hungarian digital Education Strategy (2016-2020)** needs more time than initially planned to reach its objectives. This delay is related to insufficient attention given to difficulties in amending existing legislation. In particular the inclusion of digital competence in learning outcome requirements of VET qualifications is delayed, as this requires amending current legislation.

Vague and abstract formulation of policy objectives

- The **German federal level 'Education in the digital world' strategy** (2016) aims to mainstream digital competence in schools, vocational education and institutions of higher education in all sixteen Federal States.
- On the one hand, the abstract formulations in the strategy require the elaboration of more specific steps that make the strategy work.
- On the other hand, such specific action plans are not developed at the federal level, as concrete rules and suggestions would touch upon the autonomy of the Federal States in educational affairs

Lack of human resources and support for policy implementation at VET school level

- The **Latvian Guidelines for Information Society Development 2014-2020** aimed to modernise the curriculum and development of digital information literacy for the school students and teachers.

- The hardest task seems to be the development of teacher' digital competencies. This requires management support from IVET school leaders and teachers themselves, and both are difficult.

- There is not much extra capacity for the development of digital competencies of teachers and IVET management, who often already work double shifts and lack basic digital skills. This causes that a substantial share of teachers is not enthusiastic about additional competence building.

The design of policies contextual factors are insufficiently taken into account

- This concerns for instance the *uneven development in rural and urban areas in countries*.
- In **Romania** for instance, the policy implementation is hampered by the discrepancies between more developed areas and zones with vulnerable population, especially on the rural/urban divide. These discrepancies introduce important challenges in a coherent planning of national actions in IVET. Equipment and internet access are scarce in rural areas not only in schools, but also for the general population, while digital competence levels are much lower not only for the population, but also for the teachers and trainers. This requires more profound interventions, and depends on a greater diversity of the interventions, tailored to the concrete needs of the population.

The design of policies contextual factors are insufficiently taken into account

- In **Germany**, the implementation of the 'Education in the digital world' strategy (2016) was challenged by the high degree of diversity in vocational education and training, considering also different economic structures in the regions.

- It is difficult to implement the strategy covering all 326 occupations that require formal qualification (apprenticeship) and about 150 occupations within the school-based vocational education system.

Conclusions: most common challenges

- Looking at the **policy cycle**, the challenges as identified refer mainly to the policy preparation and development and policy implementation (planning and conducting activities).
- Looking at the **possible areas** of policy challenges, the policies cover all four identified areas (context; stakeholder engagement, commitment and ownership; coordination, management and political priority; and resources) and go beyond the four areas.

Where challenges can be situated?

Area of challenge / Policy cycle	Context	Stakeholder engagement, commitment and ownership	Coordination, management and political priority	Resources
Policy preparation and development	BE-FL, DE, RO		IE, RO, HU	HU
Policy implementation (planning and conducting activities)	DE	LV	NL	LV
Policy monitoring and follow-up	DE			

Source: Authors based on McConnell (McConnell, 2014) and Lane & Hamann (Lane & Hamann, 2003).

What remedies are applied?

Area of challenge / Policy cycle	Context	Stakeholder engagement, commitment and ownership	Coordination, management and political priority	Resources
Policy preparation and development	Stakeholders on different levels agree on a common direction of impact		Clarification of tasks	Realistic planning of resources
Policy implementation (planning and conducting activities)	Regional disparities are to be taken into consideration	Increased involvement of relevant stakeholders	Identification of critical points; increased coordination between stakeholders	Sharing of resources e.g. transform largest IVET schools to IVET competence centres
Policy monitoring and follow-up	Autonomies of regions in implementing educational policies should be accounted for			

Source: Authors based on McConnell (McConnell, 2014) and Lane & Hamann (Lane & Hamann, 2003).