



*“ The role of social partners in developing qualification and occupational standards in Europe: shifting gears to tackle challenges ”*

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# CONTENTS



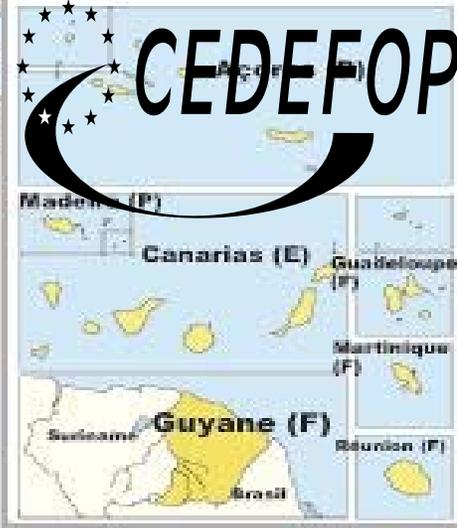
1. Cedefop's mission: to support the European VET community.
2. The role of social partners in governing and monitoring VET policies and systems in Europe: a brief review.
3. 2.1 The Copenhagen-Maastricht–Helsinki process: the Social Partners participation building up an European Area for VET.
3. The participation of social partners in developing qualification and occupational standards in European countries and sectors: clustering and mapping participation trends.
4. What is at stake for social partners in developing qualification and occupational standards? The way forward.

# 1. Cedefop's mission: *producing, exchanging and disseminating knowledge*



## **Main activities :**

- Detecting and selecting information sources: data analysis; wide dissemination to European training community.
- Promoting and carrying out research on education and training .
- Stimulating joint approaches and conclusions on European challenges in education and training topics ( stakeholders, researchers, social partners).
- A reference point for the production and exchange of new ideas .



# 2. The role of the social partners in governing and monitoring VET policies and systems in Europe: a brief review.



## 2. The political and practical dimension of Social Partners participating in governance of VET in Europe: key milestones.

### *Social Dialogue in lifelong learning (broad definition):*

*Promoting joint LLL policies to face challenges posed by the current global economy and labour markets in worker employability and company competitiveness.*

#### MILESTONES IN SOCIAL PARTNER PARTICIPATION IN VET: THE PERIOD OF *JOINT OPINIONS* (addressed to EU Commission and Member States, 1989) :

- ✦ (1990) Basic education, initial, vocational and adult training.
- ✦ (1990) Transition from school to adult and professional life.
- ✦ (1991) The best methods for enabling the broadest effective access to training.
- ✦ (1992) Vocational Qualifications and their validation.
- ✦ (1993) Women and training.
- ✦ (1994) Future actions of EU in Vet field and role of Social Partners.
- ✦ (1995) Contribution of VET in the fight against unemployment.

#### MILESTONES IN SOCIAL PARTNERS PARTICIPATION IN THE GRADUAL DEVELOPMENT OF EMPLOYMENT & VET POLICIES:

- ✦ (1995) Essen Employment council.
- ✦ (1997) Luxembourg process: "Jobs summit" (European employment strategy on Treaty of Amsterdam, 1999).
- ✦ (1998) Employment Pact
- ✦ (2000) Lisbon strategy.
- ✦ (2001) Laeken summit.
- ✦ (2002) Barcelona summit.
- ✦ (2002-2006) Copenhagen-Maastricht-Helsinki process (*Framework of actions for the lifelong development of competencies and qualifications*)

#### MILESTONES IN SOCIAL PARTNERS PARTICIPATION IN VET: CHRONOLOGY OF PERFORMANCE (*PRACTICAL ACTIONS*).

- ✦ (1988) COMET II.
- ✦ (1989) EUROTCTNET.
- ✦ (1990) FORCE.
- ✦ (1991) PETRA (II)---
- ✦ (1994) LEONARDO Da VINCI.
- ✦ (1998) JOINT OPINION ON DRAFT DECISION FOR LEONARDO DA VINCI II PROGRAMME.
- ✦ (2000-2006) LDV II
- ✦ (1998) ADAPT
- ✦ (2000). EQUAL
- ✦ (2007-2013) LLL programme

## 2.1 The Copenhagen-Maastricht-Helsinki process (2002-2006): Social Partners take part in creating an European VET Area (II).

### Copenhagen Declaration (2002)

*The vital role of Social Partners in an enhanced cooperation in VET*

- Social Partners develop, validate and recognise skills and qualifications at all levels, and to be partners in the promotion of enhanced cooperation in this area.
- Social Partners reinforce their cooperation on developing skills and qualifications at sectoral level.

### Maastricht Communiqué (2004)

*The Social Partners implement and monitor the Copenhagen process at all levels:*

- Strengthening links at National level: priorities given to common instruments and principles for transparency (Europass), guidance, quality assurance and validation of non- formal and informal learning.
- At European level: EQF and ECVET tools for supporting competence development and the learning outcomes approach.

### Helsinki Communiqué (2006)

*Social Partners participation at all levels is a key element for the success of the Copenhagen process*

*(all stakeholders on board)*

- Continuing testing and implementing of European tools (toward 2010).
- Bottom-up process, engaging social partners and sectoral organisations at national, regional and local levels.



### **3. The role of social partners in developing qualification and occupational standards in European countries and sectors: clustering and mapping participation trends.**



# 3 The Framework of Actions for Lifelong development of competencies and qualifications: Recognize and validate competences and qualifications (PRIORITY 2).

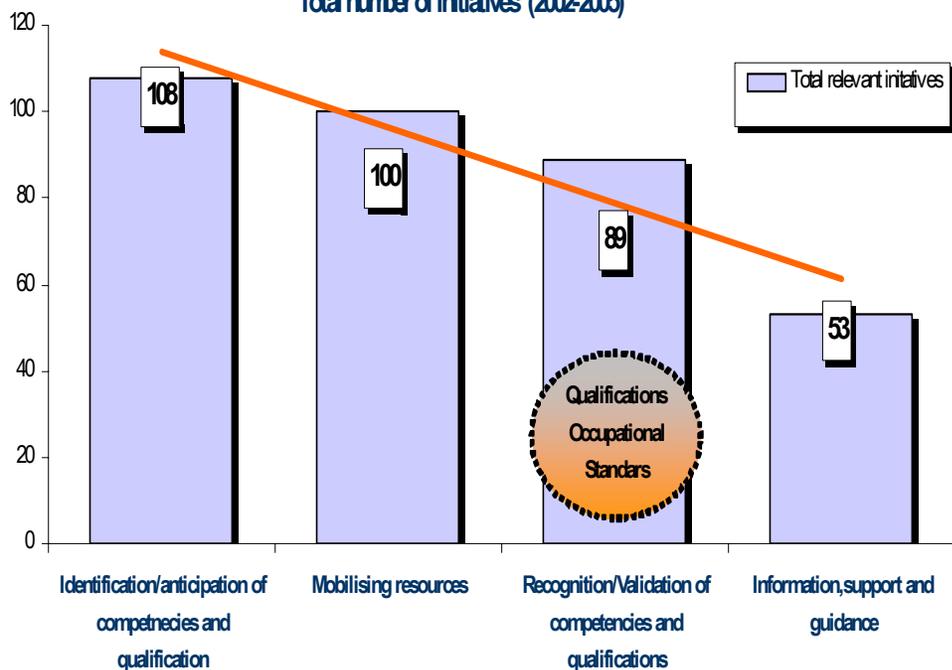
The recognition and validation and competences is essential for employability of workers and for skill development policies in companies (Source: Evaluation report 2006)



## SOME INITIATIVES DEVELOPED BY SOCIAL PARTNERS RELATED TO PRIORITY 2 (2002-2006):

- Further development of competence based qualification systems: FINLAND-FRANCE-LITHUANIA-SPAIN-NORWAY.
- Development of systems to accredit prior learning (non-formal, informal) for obtaining a (first) qualification: THE NETHERLANDS-AUSTRIA-GERMANY-SLOVENIA.
- Collective agreements including provision of concrete tools to foster validation in companies: FRANCE, BELGIUM.
- Mapping exercise on existing means of validation: GERMANY.
- Certification to respond to labour market needs: CYPRUS, GERMANY, POLAND.
- Sectoral initiatives to develop occupational standards: SWEDEN-UK-POLAND
- Influencing legislation: MOST COUNTRIES

Framework of actions for lifelong development of competencies and qualifications:  
Total number of initiatives (2002-2006)



### 3. Mapping the participation of the social partners in developing qualification and occupational standards: highlights in Southern Mediterranean countries (I).

**Portuguese Social Partners** are involved in promoting a NQF. Decision was taken in 2006:

- In March 2007, Social Partners signed an agreement with the Portuguese Government based on setting up a National Agency for Qualifications under responsibility of Labour and Education ministries: to build up a catalogue of qualifications based in learning outcomes and developing a system of recognition of formal and non formal learning. The validation system will link the qualifications standards in the national catalogue.

**Italian Social Partners** : development of enhanced cooperation in VET issues via a new mechanism of negotiation (integrated approach) ; creation of *training poles* that cooperate with regional actors with training centres and enterprises (final linkage through regional approach of sector/company level). In addition, social partners are targeting the creation of NQF:

- Social Partners are on board for defining such framework in cooperation with Labour and Educations Ministries, Universities and Regions. The definition of national criteria and the methodology for defining qualifications standards will be oriented to integrate diplomas delivered by this network of stakeholders. So, the learning outcomes approach is going to play a key role in this process.

**Spanish Social Partners** are represented in the General Council of Vocational Training since 1986. GCVET is a consultative tripartite body which assesses Government on VET. It is also the governing body of INCUAL (National Qualifications Institute) which supports GCVET in observing, defining and accrediting of qualifications standards (Law 1999).

- Sectoral/ subsectoral joint committees (bipartite) linking sectoral collective bargaining for promoting CVT. Among other tasks, they make proposals concerning different levels of CVT and the means for certification according National System of Qualifications.

### 3. Mapping the participation of the social partners in developing qualification and occupational standards: highlights in central Europe (Austria, France and Belgium) (II).

In the **Austrian system, membership in social partners' organisations is compulsory.** So mutual trust with Government is always *on board*. Current stage of SP involvement in qualifications and occupational standards is:

▪ Participation in a single overarching NQF based in learning outcomes: a national steering group for consultation and development of the NQF.

▪ Sectoral level: advisory role for draft school laws and decrees (curricula)

▪ At national level **Belgian Social Partners** have a long tradition of structural social dialogue via a formal organisation with other actors: professional profiles, occupational standards and qualifications descriptions made by SERV ( Social Economic Council/ Flemish SP).

▪ Sectors agreements (Flanders region): some of the agreements in the field of LLL include among other issues definition of occupational standards (the Government delivers standards draft for influencing guidelines for agreements).

**French Social Partners** have a long tradition of bargaining to incorporate lifelong learning issues and to influence the National Qualification classifications at different levels. The key influence of stakeholders in NQF is at sectoral level: delivering sectoral qualifications for branches in order to be included in qualification *repertoire*. Such repertoire aims to be a transparency devise for transparency of qualifications. A National Committee composed by the state (16 members) and social partners (12 members) has been set up in order to keep watch over the quality criteria for delivering qualifications.

▪ Other relevant actions of the French stakeholders has been The *National Cross-Sectoral Agreement on employees access to lifelong learning* -December 2003-( ratified by a law of May 2004) which shaped the general framework for CVT in France. The sectors are enabled for instance, to recognise and validate competences and qualifications, by the *Vocational Qualification Certificates*. They constitute one of the forms for sectoral certification of acquired skills and competences, alongside academic and vocational diplomas. Some branches have used this opportunity to develop a system of branch certificates, legitimised in the collective agreements.

### 3. Mapping the participation of the social partners in developing qualification and occupational standards: highlights in Nordic Countries (III).

**The Norwegian social partners** play a key role in VET at all levels. Their influence is based on participation in councils and committees for policy making, planning, setting qualifications standards and evaluating VET.

Nowadays, new integrated cooperation has been set up based on National Council for VET (all national stakeholders on board) and 9 trade specific VET councils which link with regional levels have influence among other issues on reform of curricula.

Development and implementation of Higher Education framework (2006): Learning outcomes approach is the base for working group set up for this purpose.

Long tradition in participating in VET, in particular in CVT. The **Danish social partners** have set up bipartite trade committees on CVT (58 sectors/ sub sectors): among other tasks, defining VET qualifications required for training and linkage with occupations in labour market.

The Vocational Training model in Sweden is based in tripartite cooperation. Parliament set strategy and objectives (Ministry of Education and Research) and **Swedish social partners** participates in definition of training standards. Sectoral agreements are engaged with competence development. Some projects at national/sectoral level are dealing with validation of sectoral skills in cooperation with Authority for Validation (2004-2007).

Like the other Nordic countries, very high involvement of **social partners in Finland**:

- Since 2004 a new model of tripartite cooperation in VET has been set up.
- National Education training Committees (33 fields): Social partners participate with other actors in education field- researchers, teachers, students- in drawing up qualification and competences. Specific design of core curricula & requirements for each competence based qualification.

### 3. Mapping the participation of the social partners in developing qualification and occupational standards: Highlights in East and Baltic countries (Poland, Hungary, Romania, Latvia) (IV).

National Tripartite Cooperation Subcouncil of Vocational Education (PINTSA) where **Latvian social partners** are actively cooperating on ensuring solutions in social, economic and education issues. Authorizing Vocational standards is one of the key tasks of this example of triangular cooperation.

- Tripartite committee has been set up also for working on the adoption of a new law on VET linked to development of NQF.

In recent years, social dialogue in VET has been increased and **Polish social partners** have gained experience in the field. Participation in working group for of National Vocational Training System (5 national organisations of employers and employees on board).

- The sectoral associations are called to participate in the implementation of sectoral (industry) training programs, in accordance with the needs of the labour market. It is the responsibility of the competent Ministry to create such programs with funds from the State budget. These associations can equally contribute to the development of occupational standards, of local strategies and social dialogue to foster continuous education.

- Poland seems to be ready to develop NQF with stakeholders on board.

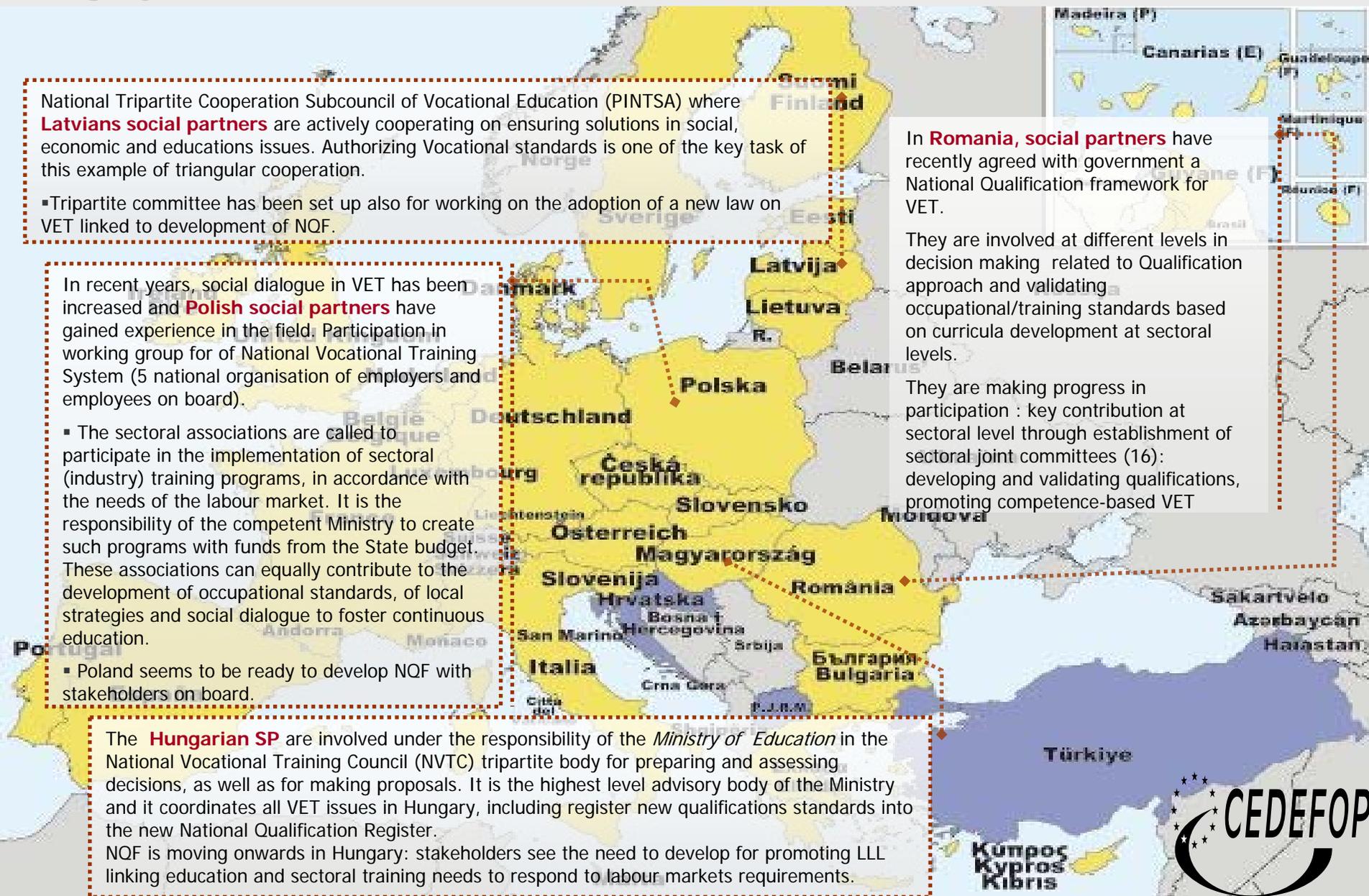
The **Hungarian SP** are involved under the responsibility of the *Ministry of Education* in the National Vocational Training Council (NVTC) tripartite body for preparing and assessing decisions, as well as for making proposals. It is the highest level advisory body of the Ministry and it coordinates all VET issues in Hungary, including register new qualifications standards into the new National Qualification Register.

NQF is moving onwards in Hungary: stakeholders see the need to develop for promoting LLL linking education and sectoral training needs to respond to labour markets requirements.

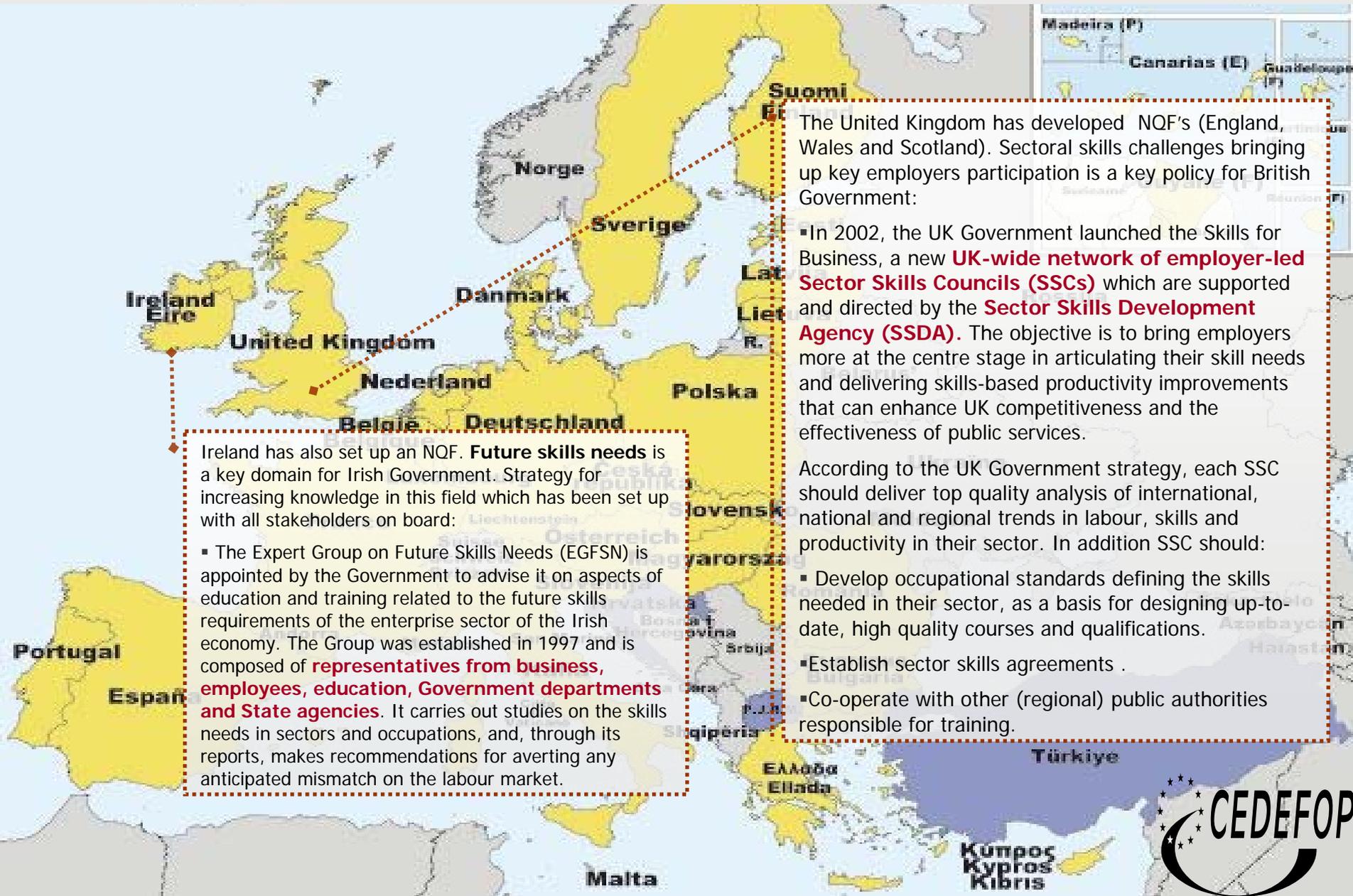
In **Romania**, **social partners** have recently agreed with government a National Qualification framework for VET.

They are involved at different levels in decision making related to Qualification approach and validating occupational/training standards based on curricula development at sectoral levels.

They are making progress in participation : key contribution at sectoral level through establishment of sectoral joint committees (16): developing and validating qualifications, promoting competence-based VET



### 3. Mapping the participation of the social partners in developing qualification and occupational standards: highlights in the UK and Ireland (V).



Ireland has also set up an NQF. **Future skills needs** is a key domain for Irish Government. Strategy for increasing knowledge in this field which has been set up with all stakeholders on board:

- The Expert Group on Future Skills Needs (EGFSN) is appointed by the Government to advise it on aspects of education and training related to the future skills requirements of the enterprise sector of the Irish economy. The Group was established in 1997 and is composed of **representatives from business, employees, education, Government departments and State agencies**. It carries out studies on the skills needs in sectors and occupations, and, through its reports, makes recommendations for averting any anticipated mismatch on the labour market.

The United Kingdom has developed NQF's (England, Wales and Scotland). Sectoral skills challenges bringing up key employers participation is a key policy for British Government:

- In 2002, the UK Government launched the Skills for Business, a new **UK-wide network of employer-led Sector Skills Councils (SSCs)** which are supported and directed by the **Sector Skills Development Agency (SSDA)**. The objective is to bring employers more at the centre stage in articulating their skill needs and delivering skills-based productivity improvements that can enhance UK competitiveness and the effectiveness of public services.

According to the UK Government strategy, each SSC should deliver top quality analysis of international, national and regional trends in labour, skills and productivity in their sector. In addition SSC should:

- Develop occupational standards defining the skills needed in their sector, as a basis for designing up-to-date, high quality courses and qualifications.
- Establish sector skills agreements .
- Co-operate with other (regional) public authorities responsible for training.





## 4. What is at stake for social partners in developing qualification and occupational standards? The way forward.



# 4.1 Lessons learned

- ✦ **Copenhagen- Maastricht- Helsinki:** more than ever the level of involvement of social partners and other stakeholders is a key factor in the success of the process.
- ✦ **Why enhanced cooperation?** The current challenging context for Europe (demographic change, low skilled people, immigration flows, sectoral and occupational change) requires policies affecting the labour market to work together: social partners are at the centre of the industrial relation systems as the stakeholders who detect the skills needed.
- ✦ **How to tackle it ? Many different ways and approaches:**

TYPOLOGY OF SOCIAL PARTNER PARTICIPATION IN LLL DOMAIN FOR DEVELOPMENT OF QUALIFICATION/OCCUPATIONAL STANDARS			
LEVEL OF COORDINATION/ TYPE OF MEASURE	BIPARTITE	TRIPARTITE	GOVERNMENT ORIENTED PROCESS
PROMOTING/ CONCLUDING AGREEMENTS	ITALY – FRANCE- SWEDEN	PORTUGAL ROMANIA	BELGIUM
NEGOTIATIONS FOCUSING ON INVOLVEMENT OF MULTI-AGENT PERSPECTIVE		ITALY	
PARTICIPATION IN COUNCILS/ STEERING COMMITTEES- GROUPS/ ADVISORY BODIES	POLAND AUSTRIA	BEL-ITA SPA-SWE FIN-NOR-LAT-HUN-AUT	UK-IRELAND
PARTICIPATING THROUGH CREATION OF JOINT SECTORAL COMMITTEES	SPAIN DENMARK BELGIUM ROMANIA		BELGIUM
DEVELOPING/DELIVERING QUALIFICATIONS	FRANCE	FRANCE	

# 4.2 ...allows us to move gears to tackle the challenges.

- ✧ Because the tools **EQF-ECVET-EUROPASS** are available: let's go for implementation!
- ✧ Benefits to citizens & business (Labour market): **VALIDATION OF NON FORMAL/INFORMAL LEARNING---RECOGNITION---TRANSPARENCY—FLEXIBILITY/MOBILITY**
- ✧ Essential: **OPTIMISING INVOLVEMENT OF STAKEHOLDERS IN QUALIFICATIONS SYSTEMS (OECD,2006)**
- ✧ Moving from **NQF** to **EQF** towards **SQF**
- ✧ **The way forward:** Building up Sectoral Qualifications Frameworks (SQF): participation of social partners will be crucial. Collective bargaining trends in Europe shows decentralisation. The sectors and companies will be a key ground for bargaining qualification and competences ( and further impact in occupational classifications).

Table 2. Levels of collective bargaining involved in wage - setting, EU-25

	Inter-sectoral	Sector	Enterprise
BE	••	•••	•
CZ		•	•••
DK	•	•••	•••
DE		•••	•••
EE	•	•	•••
EL	••	•••	•
ES	•	•••	••
FR		••	••
IE	•••	•	•
IT	•	•••	••
CY		••	•••
LV	•		•••
LT		•	•••
LU		••	••
HU	•	••	•••
MT		•	•••
NL	•	•••	•
AT		•••	•
PL	•	•	•••
PT	•	•••	••
SI	••	•••	••
SK		•••	••
FI	•••	••	•
SE		•••	•
UK		•	•••
BUL	•	•••	•
ROM		•	•••
TUR			•••

• existing level of collective bargaining  
 •• important but not dominant level of collective bargaining  
 ••• dominant level of collective bargaining  
 Inter-sectoral = Tripartite wage coordination or national bilateral agreements between peak federations

Sources : Industrial relations in Europe 2004 and national reports.



# Thank you for your attention!

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[www.trainingvillage.eu](http://www.trainingvillage.eu)

[http://www.trainingvillage.gr/etv/Projects\\_Networks/SocialP/](http://www.trainingvillage.gr/etv/Projects_Networks/SocialP/)

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- "Qualifications frameworks in Europe: platforms for collaboration integration and reform" (Document from German Presidency Conference "Realizing the European Learning Area").
- "Moving mountains: shaping Qualifications systems to promote Lifelong Learning" (OECD, 2006- Chapters 5 and 6)
- "The enlargement of Social Europe ; the role of social partners in the European employment strategy" (ETUI 2004).
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