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Area Research and Policy Analysis/KNE

CONTINUING VOCATIONAL TRAINING SURVEY - WORKSHOP **29 / 30 JUNE 2009, CEDEFOP**

- CONCEPT NOTE -

BACKGROUND

The European Continuing Vocational Training Survey (CVTS) gives a unique insight into the conditions and provision of training in enterprises. It is the only data source that provides internationally comparable, detailed statistics on the volume, content and cost of training in enterprises, and on enterprises' training policy and management. From the first round in 1994 to the third round in 2006, the survey went through several phases of development to extend the coverage and to improve the data quality. As of the implementation of CVTS3, a Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council and an implementing Regulation of the Commission provide a solid basis for the regular and stable implementation of the survey over the coming years.

OBJECTIVE

After three rounds of CVTS, and considering new emerging policy priorities and data needs, the CVTS workshop intends to take stock of achievements in CVTS, and at the same time to conclude how to further improve the acceptance, relevance and feasibility of the survey. The workshop will be a place for countries to exchange experiences and know-how, and to share good practices.

The workshop will cover a wide range of key elements of the whole data collection, beginning with the relevance of the survey, ending with the timely dissemination of results. Important points of discussion will be the availability of data in enterprises, how to increase the acceptance of this survey and to increase its utility for policy and research, for enterprises themselves and for employers' associations and trade unions. Other important points will be how to reduce response burden and facilitate data provision for enterprises, improving response rates and data quality. Last but not least, the appropriate and well-timed dissemination of results is the linchpin of the entire data collection.

The next survey will take place in 2011; the preparation process has started now. Therefore, it is the right moment to contribute to this process.

TARGET GROUP

The workshop intends to bring together different actors in the field: data users from policy and research, enterprises that provide the data, social partners that are key stakeholders of continuing vocational training in enterprises, and statisticians that finally gather, and process and disseminate the data.

CONTENT AND STRUCTURE OF THE WORKSHOP

The workshop will be divided into two main parts: the first will cover the relevance of CVTS from the political and research perspective, both at European and national levels; the second will cover countries' experiences in CVTS, and aim to provide recommendations for future surveys.

1. RELEVANCE OF THE CVTS FOR EUROPEAN AND NATIONAL TRAINING POLICY, AND FOR RESEARCH

1.1. Importance of the CVTS for assessing the impact of European education, training and employment policies

Adequate and internationally comparable statistics and indicators data on education, training and skills have acquired particular importance with the Education and Training 2010 work programme. Within the process of enhanced cooperation in vocational education and training (VET) in the European Union, the improvement of VET statistics is defined as a priority, as adequate statistics and indicators are the key to review developments in VET, and to understand what additional interventions and decisions are required from all parties involved to achieve the Copenhagen objectives.

- Key issues for presentation and/or discussion:
 - Coverage of actual and new emerging policy needs;
 - The use of CVTS data for monitoring education, training and employment policies, both at European and national levels;
 - CVT in enterprises - key part of lifelong learning;
 - Skill requirements in enterprises - the role of CVT;
 - CVT for employment and social inclusion;
 - Relationship between initial vocational training and CVT in enterprises;
 - CVTS - part of a modular system of VET/LLL statistics at national and European levels.

1.2. Importance of CVTS for VET research

The Continuing Vocational Training Survey is a particular and specific source of information for VET research: data are indispensable to analyse the conditions, structure and development of continuing vocational training in enterprises. Characteristics of enterprises and participants in CVT broaden the basis and enlarge the scope for detailed analysis. Analytical results might substantiate hypotheses on training behaviour of enterprises (and to a certain extent individuals), different forms of continuing vocational training, organisational and human resources development, and the impact of public measures on in vocational education and training.

- Key issues for presentation and/or discussion:
 - Research results on VET/CVT - input for evidence-based policy measures;
 - Important research issues for which CVTS data are needed, e.g. organisation and management of CVT in enterprises, the role of social partners, assessment of skill/training needs, volume of CVT and possible interaction with IVT, incentives

and obstacles for enterprises to provide CVT, costs and financing of CVT in enterprises;

- Complementarity with Labour Force Survey and Adult Education Survey data – requirements and limits;
- Added value of microdata analysis – making better use of resources by granting access to the anonymised European data set.

2. FROM CVTS3 TO CVTS4: LEARNING FROM COUNTRIES' EXPERIENCES ENSURES SUCCESS

Though there is an increasing demand for more and more detailed data on training in enterprises as a key component of lifelong learning, there might be also a need to strengthen the focus of the survey, and definitely to accelerate the production process. Practical experiences and data quality provide evidence that the current pattern of the survey is too burdensome for enterprises. Data requests do not comply with the realities in enterprises, and as a consequence, do not provide the desired output, in terms of complete, valid and reliable data.

Considering new policy and data need requires a thorough review of the current scope and coverage of the survey, the claim for extending the survey might not be realistic. Solutions have to be found if new important items should be inserted into the survey. There is a need to evaluate which of the current survey items brought little added value, or were not suitable for providing reliable data via an enterprise survey.

Reducing response burden and increasing response rates might not necessarily and exclusively be linked to the number of items in the questionnaire. They might also require clearer questions that are more understandable for enterprises. There is a need for common understanding on items that relate to data that are available or not too burdensome to gather in enterprises. Evaluation in countries is needed to clarify how data collection modes and tools impact and might facilitate data provision for enterprises.

There is an absolute need to accelerate the production and dissemination process of CVTS results. Statistics and data not available in time diminish the acceptance of and interest in the survey. This holds also for the access to the anonymised European data file for research purposes.

The overall acceptance and relevance of CVTS is strictly linked to the quality approach in statistics and the agreed criteria: accuracy, comparability, coherence/consistency, accessibility and clarity, cost and burden.

2.1. Enterprises - the decisive point in the data collection process

Data provision by enterprises is crucial towards the quality of the survey. Overall data quality is in principle predetermined at the top of the survey - in enterprises. Once this data collection process is finished, the completeness, validity and reliability of the data cannot be improved anymore. At the most, well justified, adapted and controlled imputation processes might remedy deficits, but not necessarily. Imputations are “last chance” but no alternative to a thorough follow-up with respondents.

- Key issues for presentation and/or discussion:
 - relevance of statistical information on CVT and on skill needs for enterprises - motivation of enterprises to participate in CVTS;

- data availability in small, medium and large enterprises - from “on-the-spot” to “black hole”;
- survey burden and enterprises’ responsiveness - what makes the difference;
- data collection methods and how to facilitate data provision.

2.2. Experiences and recommendations: ways forward to improve the overall survey approach and, with it, data quality

National Statistical Offices bear an especially heavy responsibility for the success of the CVTS; they have the necessary expertise and experience to appropriately implement the survey. A thorough evaluation of the surveys, both from the European and national perspectives, will certainly reveal the potential for improvement: clear concepts and definitions; suitable national questionnaire design, including necessary explanations and relevant examples; motivation and comprehensive follow-up of respondents; adequate data collection methods; compliance with methodological requirements (e.g., up-dated sampling frame, representative sample); timeliness of data delivery to Eurostat.

There are many possible approaches and measures to increase acceptance and improve quality. Revisions solely oriented towards the reduction of items in the questionnaire will be as unsuccessful as the exclusive change of the survey design or the data collection mode. There is a need to consider the complexity and internal structure of the entire production process, whilst taking into account national characteristics and particularities.

- Key points of presentation and/or discussion:
 - Improve timeliness – how to organise and manage data collection and processing efficiently: the perspective of enterprises and NSIs;
 - Response burden vs response rates and quality (validity, reliability, completeness);
 - Reducing burden and survey cost - use of registers and other sources to complete the data;
 - Change the survey design - reduce response burden (phasing, modularisation);
 - Data collection mode(s) – is the Internet the future;
 - Other specific issues -
 - extension of NACE coverage;
 - extension of size coverage.

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