**Annex L – English Editing Tests**

**Tenderers are requested to edit the text below in English following the rules laid out in Cedefop’s style manual in Annex H, and produce two versions of the text, one with light editing and one with substantive editing.**

Executive Summary

The growing awareness of the crucial role of skills and competences in enabling individuals, firms and society to excel in a wide range of outcomes has led the European Commission to launch the new skills for new jobs initiative (European Commission, 2008a). Among its objectives, the initiative aims to improve the capacity to anticipate and match skill needs in the European Union (EU); make the best use of existing initiatives and instruments; gather results comparable at EU level; and promote a truly European market for jobs and training that corresponds to the mobility needs and aspirations of its citizens.

The availability of more and better statistical information on skill needs can have various economic and social positive impacts, provided that information is widely and easily accessible to persons and enterprises and is used as a springboard to implement policies and measures to improve the matching of the skills demanded by the enterprises with those of the individuals.

Specifically, the expected positive impacts could enhance:

1. the free movement of workers, as a result of the improved transparency of the cross-country labour market;
2. the competitive position of EU enterprises, which would be able to deploy personnel with better and higher skills;
3. the earnings of workers, who could offer their skills to the labour market to find better and more highly paid jobs;
4. the overall level of employment, due to the reduced qualitative mismatch between labour demand and supply;
5. the status of unskilled workers, who could take training courses to improve their skills and thus increase their probability of finding a job;
6. the general functioning of the labor market. The availability of more and higher quality information increases the transparency of the labour market, improves access to labour-market information and, consequently, helps narrow the gap between demand and supply of work;
7. the type of education/training demanded and provided.

Cedefop has pro-actively launched several, particularly relevant projects aimed at the early identification of skill needs in Europe. The forecasting exercise was launched a few years ago and in 2008 delivered preliminary results on the skills demand (Cedefop, 2008a) and supply (Cedefop, 2009a) outlook. Matching the demand and supply forecasts will enable identification of the potential skill gaps of the future.

Another major objective of Cedefop’s strategy to anticipate future skill needs is the possible use of employers surveys, which have the capacity to generate more qualitative information to complement the forecasting exercise.

The project here illustrated is a first step in this direction. Its aim is to evaluate the feasibility of an employers survey on skill needs in Europe, according to three options identified by Cedefop and Skillsnet, its network for the early identification of skill needs, and summarised below ([[1]](#footnote-2)):

* 1. modify European employers surveys by including questions or a section on skill needs;
  2. adjust national surveys in selected Member States to achieve comparability of results;
  3. launch a European employers skills survey (EESS) aimed primarily at identifying skill needs.

The starting point of the analysis was to identify the methodological approaches used for assessing skill needs. A review of literature and international experience points to three main approaches: the first approach focusses on the enterprise occupational structure and its changes over time; the second approach investigates the occupational needs of the enterprises (leading to the opening of new vacancies); the third approach analyses the training provided by the enterprises to bridge skill gaps.

These three approaches have different characteristics, affecting inevitably the surveys outcomes and costs. For example, surveys on occupational structure require detailed information on occupations and, possibly, on wages, information that is better obtained through postal questionnaires, which cost relatively little but tend to generate low response rates. While surveys on occupational needs (vacancies) and training are likely to be best implemented through computer-assisted telephone interviewing (CATI) or computer-assisted personal interviewing (CAPI). It is costlier but enjoys higher response rates. The three approaches also differ in terms of survey timing and frequency: surveys based on vacancies focus on the short term, and so they must be repeated at regular intervals; to the contrary, the analysis of the occupational structure does not require such timely information and data could be collected less frequently.

State-of-the-art analysis and possible methodologies

The first step in modifying an EU survey or adjust a national surveys is to analyse the state of the art in the EU and its Member States to obtain a precise picture of the information already available and to assess the extent of the modifications or adjustments required.

The analysis of the following EU surveys also identifies the most suitable survey to be adapted.

1. the Eurostat European continuing vocational training survey (CVTS) in enterprises;
2. the Eurostat job vacancy survey (JVS);
3. the Eurostat community innovation survey (CIS);
4. the European Commission's Directorat-General for Employment, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities (DG EMPL) European public employment services (PES) vacancy monitor (EPVM – discontinued);
5. the Eurofound European company survey (ECS);
6. the European Agency for safety and health at work survey of enterprises on new and emerging risks (ESENER);
7. the Eurostat structure of earnings survey (SES);
8. the Eurostat adult education survey (AES);
9. the Eurostat labour force survey (LFS).

The EU surveys listed above already include some useful questions to acquire a more complete set of information on the skills issue. However, such questions are not related directly to skill needs, and their complete analysis would necessarily require precise data.

In terms of vacancies, the JVS provides annual data on changes in the annual job vacancy rate; the number of job vacancies; and the number of occupied jobs by region, economic activity, occupation.

Occupational structure/employment is covered by the AES, which includes some useful questions on employment/occupations, including the type of occupation ([[2]](#footnote-3)); the type of contract (part-time, fixed term) by sector and size of the enterprise. The LFS gives key information on occupations and their characteristics. It also provides information on the occupation of individuals by 3- or 4-digit level and by region; working time; job permanency; the main characteristics of atypical work; usual worked hours per week (and reasons for overtime). Clearly, the LFS is largely focused on investigating the levels of employment and unemployment; labour status (employed/unemployed); and the search for employment (seeking/not seeking, reasons etc.). However, both the AES and the LFS survey individuals not employers. The SES collects some useful information on the occupational structure of enterprises, i.e. the total number of employees in the local unit (although this is an optional variable) and, for each employee, the occupation (ISCO-88 (COM) ([[3]](#footnote-4)) ) at 2-digit level and, if possible, 3-digits level. Finally, the ECS informs on the number of employees; female employment and part-time employment, along with the main characteristic of their contractual arrangements and working time arrangement.

Training is very well covered from the viewpoint of both the enterprises and the individuals. Compared with the other surveys, CVTS3 gives more details on the training characteristics of enterprises. It indicates whether the respondent enterprise employs highly skilled persons ([[4]](#footnote-5)), if the company is innovative or not ([[5]](#footnote-6)) (a critical analysis of this data could broadly indicate training gaps, and therefore skill needs, by sector, enterprise size, qualification level of employees and level of innovation). CVTS3 also collects training data, offering a broad indication of the type of gaps between the skills possessed by the employees and the skills needed by the enterprises. Moreover, the CVTS3 gathers information on the capacity of the current training in meeting the needs of each enterprise. This information could give an initial indication of potentially unsatisfied skill needs. The SES gives information on the highest successfully completed education and training reached by each employee of the respondent enterprise. The AES includes many questions that could be used to highlight some important aspects of skill needs: level of education attained, field of education and information about unfinished education and training. In addition, it enquires whether the reason for participating in formal and non-formal training is job-related and whether the employer supports the training (both could indicate the existence of unexpressed skill needs within the enterprises). The LFS partly enquires about the education and training of students or apprentices in regular education, although this information would not contribute significantly to the identification of the enterprises’ skill needs. Never the less, it does ask a question that might be of help, i.e. does the learning activity take place during paid working hours (indicator of a potentially unsatisfied skill need within the firm). The ECS investigates whether the company periodically and systematically checks the need for further training and the groups of employees subject to the check. The ECS also collects data on whether the employees have been given time off to undergo further training and the purpose of such training. The questionnaire relates to potential skill mismatches: vocational adjustment of new employees; preparation of employees for new tasks; training after a long absence.

On the subject of skill needs, the CVTS3 investigates how frequently the enterprise implements formal procedures to evaluate future skill needs. The survey explores the reasons why the enterprise does not provide CVT courses or other forms of CVT for employees: one of the reasons given in the questionnaire is ‘the existing skills and competences of the persons employed corresponded to the current need of the enterprise’ (Eurostat, 2006, p. 29). The AES contains some information on skills that could be used to highlight some important aspects of skill needs. The survey includes questions on: the reasons for participating in formal and non-formal training (if job-related or not); and if they receive the support of their employer (both could indicate the existence of unexpressed skill needs within the enterprises); how much individuals use (or expects to use) the skills or knowledge they acquired from training; the use of ICT (and level of expertise); the use of languages (and level of expertise). Finally, the CIS asks whether the lack of qualified personnel counts among the possible hurdles to innovation.

Thus, concerning skill needs drivers, the CIS provides data on the enterprises engaged in innovation activities and the relative expenditure by sector. This could provide valuable data about the economic sectors potentially most influenced by skill shortages and gaps due to innovation.

The results of the analysis of the EU surveys showed that, in the short term, the one that could be more easily adapted to obtain information on skill needs is the CVTS: it uses a common methodology; provides coverage and breakdown by geographical area and sector; is carried out regularly; and already surveys relevant variables. In addition, the CVTS is presently under review, offering an excellent opportunity to suggest incorporating changes aimed at assessing skill needs.

Given that the CVTS already includes several questions on training, the type of modification needed would be ‘soft’, i.e. it would require solely the incorporation of a minimal number of additional questions.

The main limitation to modifying the CVTS is that it does not collect information on occupations ([[6]](#footnote-7)), which means it would not be possible to link skill needs with occupations. Linking skills to occupations is useful because it is easier for employers to address skill shortages by occupations and it is more comparable with the Cedefop forecasting exercise, which is based on the link between occupations and skills.

As for the state-of-the-art analysis of the Member States, CEDEFOP sent a questionnaire to the national experts designed to supplement the information already provided during the Cedefop workshops held in 2007 in Bucharest ([[7]](#footnote-8)) and in 2008 in Paris ([[8]](#footnote-9)), which turned out to be insufficient. The questionnaire sought information on the characteristics of the three methodological approaches (occupational structure, occupational needs, training) used by the existing national surveys.

Responses to the questionnaire were received from 19 Member States: 17 of these reported surveys undertaken using one or more approaches; two of them responded that they had discontinued their national surveys.

An analysis of the questionnaires revealed that several Member States conduct surveys on occupational structure and occupational needs, but use substantially different methodologies. Those questionnaires with the requisites of frequency and minimum set of already surveyed variables that could be adjusted to incorporate questions useful for the assessment of skill needs total seven for the occupational structure approach ([[9]](#footnote-10)) and eight for the occupational needs approach ([[10]](#footnote-11)).

The occupational needs approach appears to be preferable to the occupational structure one, because it covers the largest number of Member States, but mainly because it would cover four out of the five largest ones accounting for the largest shares in total EU employment (the other approach would cover only two of them).

Table 1. *National surveys that could be adjusted*

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Occupational structure Regular surveys covering occupations | Occupational needs Regular surveys covering current or future vacancies |
| Germany | Germany |
|  | France |
| Estonia |  |
|  | Italy |
|  | Lithuania |
| Luxembourg | Luxemburg |
| Hungary | Hungary |
|  | the Netherlands |
| Poland |  |
| Finland |  |
| United Kingdom | United Kingdom |

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##### Interviews with experts

An important part of the feasibility study was to assess, through personal interviews, the viewpoints of experts and officials, in particular those of the Directorate-General for Employment, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities (DG EMPL), Directorate-General for Education and Culture (DG EAC), Eurostat, the OECD (with regard to the programme for the international assessment of adult competencies, PIAAC), the ILO, and two representatives of social partners.

The results of the interviews confirmed the validity of employers surveys as a tool for assessing skill needs, especially in the shorter term. As for medium- or long-term forecasts, enterprises can sometimes provide information on the general tendencies, but are usually unable to go into detail. Employers can provide information on the current situation, but it is hard for them to forecast their future needs.

Disregarding the costs and benefits, the opinions of the experts differed on which of the three possible options (modify EU surveys, adjust national surveys, launcha new European survey) would be more suited to obtain data on skill needs. Some of the respondents believed it information on skill needs should be collected by adjusting the national surveys, while others favor European data, either by modifying an existing survey or by designing and issuing a new one. In particular, it was underscored that, in terms of the adjustment of the national surveys, the Member States would not be very keen to change their own surveys and methodologies and, therefore, that the Commission would have to play a major role in ‘persuading’ them.

The opinion of experts was also asked on the most suitable methodological approach (occupational structure, occupational needs, training) for skill needs surveys. Their opinions differed on this issue too, however they concluded that all three approaches were valid.

The widespread opinion is that the most critical aspect of Employers Surveys is the burden these place on the respondents and the reluctance of the employers to answer them, which explains the risk of very low response rates. Clearly, while it is necessary to minimise the burden on enterprises, it is also clear that there are not many alternatives. However, if the employers are told about the advantages of having more information on skill needs, this might boost their motivation to answer the questionnaires. It is crucial to collect exclusively necessary and useful data to minimise the burden on enterprises.

About modifying an EU survey, Eurostat highlighted the surveys closer to skills and skill needs, i.e. the CIS, JVS and CVTS. The CVTS is probably the best candidate for adaptation because it is currently under review, presenting an opportunity for its further development to enable the assessment of skill needs through the analysis of enterprise training policies. Nevertheless, it was pointed out that the CVTS does not presently contain information on occupations and modifying it would involve several steps and the participation of the Member States.

Several more complex and time-consuming steps are needed to launch a new survey compared with those needed to adapt the CVTS. The major potential obstacle against the implementation of a new survey is that social policies, and hence social statistics (which would be the domain of this new survey), are not a top priority on the agenda of the European Commision. As a rule, there has to be a national experience (best practice) to convince the Commission that a new survey is needed. Also, an essential requisite would be that DG EMPL takes a very strong position on this issue.

Types of questions to ask

Using survey on occupational structure to investigate skill needs enables the observation of changes over time and the collection of information on the skill gaps that employers believe relevant to their firms. Skill gaps are generally defined as the distance between the competencies and qualifications of the existing workforce and the production or organizational needs of the firm. A survey that aims to assess skill needs by investigating the occupational structure and skill gaps would need to be structured sequentially, as follows:

1. assess the firm’s occupational structure (ISCO 2- or 3-digit or equivalent, bearing in mind that the more detailed the occupation level, the longer the questionnaire and that repetitions can occur when asking about the skill gaps, etc., for each category);
2. assess the wage scale associated with each occupation, considering this type of information is not always provided easily (this step could be performed together with point (a));
3. assess skill gaps by asking, for each occupation, whether the workforce has met the firm’s production and organisational needs (in this case the English skills survey is very direct as it asks employers whether they thinks the staff is proficient in doing the job);
4. assess skill-related deficiencies by investigating the relative type of lack, distinguishing between technical/practical skills (manual dexterity, ability in the use of tools and instruments, skills on information technologies); cognitive skills (numeracy, literacy skills, administrative/management skills, knowledge of foreign languages, problem-solving skills, creative thinking); and social skills (oral/written communication, customer relationships, ability to work in a team);
5. ask the firm what action it has taken to bridge specific skill gaps (for example, new vacancies and/or training).

A survey that adopts the occupational needs approach must distinguish, above all, between traditional vacances and hard-to-fill ones because it is in this latter category skill shortages emerge. However, skill shortages are not the only reason, vacancies may be hard to fill because of the low wages paid, harsh working conditions, etc. Therefore, it is essential to investigate thoroughly the reasons for a hard-to-fill vacancy. A survey that aims to assess skill needs by investigating vacancies would need to be structured as follows:

1. ask about vacancies;
2. ask about hard-to-fill vacancies;
3. under hard-to-fill vacancies, ask the reason underpinning the difficulty, distinguishing between, on the applicants’ part: lack of qualifications; lack of work experience; lack of skills; and, on the employers’ part: potentially poor working conditions (number of hours, location, etc.); low wages/career opportunities;
4. under the section on skill-related deficiencies, investigate the type of lack, distinguishing between: technical/practical skills (manual dexterity, ability in the use of tools and instruments, skills on information technologies); cognitive skills (numeracy, literacy skills, administrative/management skills, knowledge of foreign languages, problem-solving skills, creative thinking); social skills (oral/written communication, customer relationships, ability to work in a team).

The structure of a survey that adopts the training approach to assess skill needs should distinguish between: the need for new skills – i.e., skills not yet found within the enterprise’s workforce – and the updating/broadening of existing skills in the workforce, in the following sequence:

1. ask whether the firm provides the workforce with training and, if so, the extent of that training (training intensity). This section should distinguish training intensity by occupation;
2. ask what type of training is carried out, distinguishing between internal formal training; external training; on-the-job training (job rotation, initial training, etc.);
3. ask the reasons for staff training, distinguishing between the updating/broadening of skills; the need for new skills; and regulatory compliance (some jobs are required by law to undergo a certain amount of training); skill-related reasons;
4. under skill-related reasons, investigate the type of skill deficiencies, distinguishing between technical/practical skills (manual dexterity, ability in the use of tools and instruments, skills on information technologies); cognitive skills (numeracy, literacy skills, administrative/management skills, knowledge of foreign languages, problem-solving skills, creative thinking); and social skills (oral/written communication, customer relationships, ability to work in a team);
5. ask about and assess the results of any workforce training, i.e. whether the training investment has yielded tangible results for the enterprise, and whether it plans additional strategies or follow-up actions.

To ensure a complete assessment of skill needs, additional useful information can be obtained through ‘auxiliary’ or ‘context’ questions, which play an important role in interpreting the results of the questions on skills. These supplementary questions would ideally cover several areas, such as work organisation practices, product/process innovation, openness towards foreign markets.

Costs estimates

In estimating the cost of the surveys, the focus of this study is on the direct costs, measured in terms of the workload needed to perform the survey activities. In fact, such costs account for the largest percentage of total costs, whereas other costs, such as technical and computing equipment, are not decisive.

The study estimated the costs by first identifying all the activities inherent in conducting a survey. After defining these, it applied the time needed to perform each one and then computed the relevant labour costs.

For the European surveys, some activities are performed by the EU Institution (Eurostat), others by the Member States (generally by the national statistics offices). The survey activities can be grouped into five broad categories:

1. The preliminary activities carried out by the EU institution consist mainly in preparing the methodology aspects of the survey and in discussing with Member States;
2. The preliminary activity carried out by the Member States consists in sampling and selecting enterprises to be surveyed;
3. Data collection performed by Member-States is the core of the survey and can be collected in different ways: CATI, postal, CAPI, web-based, etc.,
4. Data processing is performed by Member States and follows data collection. It comprises quality checks, validation procedures and generates the final data;
5. Final activities is performed by the EU institution and consists in validating data received from Member States and in producing EU official data.

Survey costs can vary according to the complexity (length) of the questionnaire and size of the sample basket. Cost estimates assume that the questionnaire will be as simple (short) as possible, containing only the minimum set of key questions needed to assess skill needs.

The feasibility study considers that the survey would be addressed exclusively to private enterprises and not to the public sector. In fact, a survey of the public sector would require a specific methodology and a different set of questions. Moreover, the methods used for public-sector employment and recruitment tend to differ substantially between Member States, suggesting to use country-specific methodologies.

Nevertheless, information on public-sector skill needs would be desirable because public organisations, for example those operating in education and in health, employ a large share of highly skilled workers and skill gaps have an important (and negative) impact on society as a whole.

In quantifying the sample basket of enterprises, it is assumed that the surveys would be conducted on a stratified sample of exclusively four broad economic sectors (industry, construction, trade, services) and three enterprise-size classes (1-49, 50-249, 250+ persons employed). Based on the 27 Member States, the EU sample basket would total approximately 79 500 enterprises (alternatively, were the sample basket to be stratified into 16 economic sectors ([[11]](#footnote-12)) instead of four, the scope of the sample basket would increase to about 207 000 enterprises).

The results show that the launch of a new survey would be the most costly option, for both the EU institution and the Member-State: using the occupational needs approach, the first round would have an estimated total cost of EUR 2 080 000; using the occupational structure approach, the survey would cost an estimated EUR 942 000 (both cases assume that the survey would be compulsory).

The cost difference is due mainly to the former approach using CATI to collect data, enabling immediate responses, while the second approach collect data via postal questionnaires as the types of questions require more time to be answered.

The estimated cost for adapting the EU survey (CVTS) would be 367 000 EUR for the first round. The adjustment of the national survey would be much cheaper due to the low number of Member States involved.

Table 2 Estimated cost of the first round of employers surveys, at constant prices (euros)

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | New EU Survey | | Adaptation  of EU survey | Adjustment of national surveys | |
| Occupational structure | Occupational Needs | Training | Occupational structure | Occupational needs |
| Data collection method | Postal | CATI | mixed | mixed | mixed |
| Survey frequency | every 4 years | every 2 years | every 4 years | every 4 years | every 2 years |
| Cost EU institution | 184 000 | 184 000 | 70 000 | 79 000 | 85 000 |
| Cost Member States | 759 000 | 1 897 000 | 297 000 | 89 000 | 172 000 |
| Total | 942 000 | 2 081 000 | 367 000 | 168 000 | 257 000 |
| *Note*: Values are rounded; figures may not add to totals because of the rounding | | | | | |

An aspect of the cost analysis that should not be underestimated is the burden of the survey on the employers. Although the employers have no monetary outlay, it is actually an opportunity cost, meaning that the amount of time spent by the respondents to answer the questionnaire stops them from carrying out other work activities.

In this study, the opportunity cost has been measured in terms of the amount of time spent answering the questionnaire and then quantified according to the labour cost (based on data taken from the SES of Eurostat’s).

The results show that a new EU survey based on occupational structure would be the more burdensome, costing the respondents around EUR 1 120 000 (for one round). That can be attributed to fairly long time required to answered the type of questions asked.

One round of this survey would work out to a burden on employees 3.75 times higher than that of an EU survey based on occupational needs (which would be CATI-driven with questions that can be answered quickly). Adapting the EU survey (CVTS) would generate on respondents a burden of about EUR 285,000 (one round). The adjustment of national surveys, regardless of the approach, would generate a relatively low burden on enterprises, but the values would refer to only seven or eight Member States.

Table 3 Estimated burden on employers of first round of employers surveys, at constant prices (EUR).

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | New EU survey | | Adaptation of EU survey | Adjustment of national surveys | |
| Occupational structure | Occupational needs | Training | Occupational structure | Occupational needs |
| Data collection method | Postal | CATI | mixed | mixed | mixed |
| Survey frequency | every 4 years | every 2 years | every 4 years | every 4 years | every 2 years |
| Burden on enterprises | 1 120 000 | 149 000 | 285 000 | 48 000 | 32 000 |
| *Note:* Values are rounded | | | | | |

Evaluation of the survey results

Regardless of costs the five options would generate results with different characteristics in terms of quality of data produced and other elements.

The geographical coverage achieved by adjusting the national surveys would encompass solely seven or eight Member States, and not the whole EU. This means that the adjusted national surveys would provide incomplete information.

In terms of the reliability of data, data collected through EU surveys (new or adapted) have a common quality standard (set by EUROSTAT), which makes them more reliable than data obtained through adjusted national surveys. In fact, each Member State has its own quality criteria.

Clearly, adjusting the surveys conducted in the Member States would not enable a high level of comparability across the countries, not only because the information does not cover the whole EU, but also because each Member State uses a specific data-collection method (e.g. statistical unit, CATI, postal, etc.). That would not change after the national survey adjustment (which, in fact, would consist solely of incorporating a set of questions on skill needs). While, both a modified CVTS and a new EU survey would provide fully comparable results.

The option chosen would not affect comparability with the results of the forecasting exercise, but the approach would: only the results of surveys that give occupational information can be compared with those of the forecasting exercise.

Timeliness is another important element to be considered. Adjusting the national surveys and adapting the CVTS can be implemented in a much shorter time than launching a new EU survey. The timeliness of the results – i.e., time elapsing from the start of data collection to the availability of final statistical data – depends exclusively on the approach: data on occupational needs and training can be generated faster than data on occupational structure (because it is quicker and simpler to collect and process data).

No relevant differences exist between the five approaches options, in terms of influence of economic cycles, data or objectivity of the responses ([[12]](#footnote-13)).

Based on the above and regardless of the approach adopted, the reasons in favour of an EU survey – adapted or new – outweigh those in favour of adjusting the national surveys.

That said, the results of the cost-effectiveness analysis show that the EU surveys, especially if new, cost far more than the cost of adjusting existing surveys.

Conclusions

The following conclusions can be drawn from the above analysis of the three option assessed.

Considering the state of the art at both European and Member State level, modifying (adding questions on skills) some existing surveys would generate a potential added value. In particular, in terms of national surveys, the most suitable ones to adjust are occupational needs surveys, which cover the highest number of Member States and most of the larger States themselves. At the same time, at European level, an adequately modified CVTS could be the source of information on skill needs.

The cost estimates indicate a clear and precise ranking across the different options: the less expensive option is to adjust the national surveys (referred to only eight Member States); the second less-expensive option is to modify the European survey (in this case, the CVTS); finally, the most expensive option would be to design and implement a new European survey.

However, cost considerations alone are not sufficient to fully evaluate the three options, whose outcomes and potential benefits also need to be assessed. An analysis of the type and quality of information that the surveys can produce shows that the first two options (adjusting national surveys and modifying the CVTS) rank second best to that of creating a new European skills survey, ranked first best. A major drawback to adjusting the national surveys is that their outcome would not enable the results to be compared across countries. Not only would few countries have information on skill needs, but also, even among those that could provide such information, the methodological differences would considerably hamper the comparability of results.

Modifying the CVTS would not cause a problem in the comparability of results, but another kind of problem as it does not link skill needs to occupations. The CVTS does not collect detailed data on occupations and any attempt to use it to investigate occupations should be ruled out due to the radical change it would cause to its design and structure.

According to the above analysis, the best option seems to launchi a new European skills survey. Although it is the more expensive of the three, it is the only option that would enable to collect qualitative information on skill needs truly useful for policy practice and comparable across Member States.

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1. () As stated in the call for tender of this project: contract No 2008-0184 AO/RPA/AZU-TODUN/Feasibility-Employers survey/020/08. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
2. () Type of occupation according to four categories of employees, grouped into high skilled white collar; low-skilled white collar; high-skilled blue collar and low-skilled blue collar. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
3. () The EU variant of ISCO-88. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
4. () A specific question asks about the total labour costs of persons employed: ‘what were the total labour costs of persons employed by the enterprise?’ An average cost per employee higher than the national/regional or sector average value could mean that the enterprise recruits more highly qualified individuals (Eurostat, 2006, p. 13). [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
5. () A question on the issue is ‘in the reference year 2005, did the enterprise introduce any new or significantly improved goods, services, or methods of producing or delivering these goods or services?’ (Eurostat, 2006, p. 13). [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
6. () Information on occupations was collected in the earlier round of the survey; whether this information will be introduced again in the next round is presently under discussion. However, even if the information is re-introduced, it is likely to focus only on broad occupational groups. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
7. () Cedefop’s Skillsnet expert workshop on Enterprise surveys as a tool for identification of skill needs, held in Bucharest on 21 and 22 June 2008. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
8. () Cedefop’s Skillsnet expert workshop on Employers’ surveys as a tool for identification of skill needs, held in Paris on 22 and 23 May 2008. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
9. () The Member States are the following: Germany, Estonia, Luxembourg, Hungary, Poland, Finland, United Kingdom (separately for England, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales). [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
10. () Germany, France, Italy, Lithuania, Hungary, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, United Kingdom (separately for England, Northern Ireland, Scotland) [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
11. () Aggregated starting from the 1- and 2-letter coded of the NACE classification. [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
12. () The only case when they would be affected concerns future vacancies. [↑](#footnote-ref-13)