

Main Challenges to European VET Research comparison

- Comparative research is always a challenge due to the multiple factors that need to be accounted for.
- There is a question about the comparability of comparative research that uses different assumptions, disciplines and methods.
- Comparative VET research requires knowledge in depth as well as in breadth.
 - It is at its best when multidisciplinary.

Challenges: from description to explanation

- Why is this research being carried out? What question/s is it trying to answer.
- Answering *how* questions: descriptions of processes.
- Answering *why* questions: explanations (in terms of causes or reasons).
- E.g. Why did X occur in Ruritania but not in Ambrosia? The need for more fine-grained comparative methods (Pilz 2022).
- Explanations are advanced for a purpose: to answer a question.

Challenges: framing explanations.

Some thoughts on explanatory adequacy.

Explanations should be:

- **Aligned** to the question to be answered.
- **Comprehensive and relevant** – sufficient to explain the phenomenon investigated and providing more relevant detail than any alternative.
- **Coherent and consistent** – without internal contradiction, and a clear argument with integrated methodology.
- **Robust**: capable of withstanding the most obvious objections and challenges.
- **Economical**: explanation does not overcomplicate the issue nor does it employ apparatus that is not strictly necessary.

What are the main steps to be taken?

- The need to **monitor trends**, eg in business and work processes, multinational integration, industrial relations, political and social change (eg demographic trends, migration, changing social expectations).
- **Setting priorities**: both trends and policy imperatives.
- **Multidisciplinarity** – this needs to take into account linguistic and conceptual as well as institutional and historical variation.
- **Team building**: there are particular challenges associated with multidisciplinary working.
- **Where is the expertise?** the need for an audit of expertise across the disciplines and particularly taking account of the next generation of researchers.