

Case study Portugal

The future of vocational education and training in Europe Volume 4

Delivering lifelong learning: the changing relationship between IVET and CVET

By Gert-Jan Lindeboom, March 2022
AO/DSI/JP/Future_of_VET/003/19

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Please cite this publication as:

Lindeboom Gert-Jan (2023). *Case study Portugal: The future of vocational education and training in Europe volume 4*. Delivering lifelong learning: the changing relationship between IVET and CVET Facilitating vocational learning: the influence of assessments. Thessaloniki: Cedefop.

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Part 1: Introduction IVET and the learning of adults

To set the scene, please briefly introduce the role IVET providers play in providing learning to adults (the research team will provide some first descriptions obtained from literature) and discuss country-characteristics concerning the institutional interplay between IVET and the learning of adults (or the CVET system). You can use illustrations from the **two sectors selected** (Industrial Manufacturing and the Retail sector).

VET in Portugal offers an array of programmes, both flexible in duration and type. In 2007 the national qualifications system (*Sistema nacional de qualificações, SNQ*) was introduced which reorganised VET into one single system. In 2017 this framework was updated. All VET qualifications grant a double certification: a profession and an education certificate.

- VET programmes are usually part of secondary education, but in 2004, elements of VET were introduced in some primary education programmes as well.
- Upper secondary VET (*cursos profissionais*) is provided by public, private and cooperative institutes and gives access to tertiary education and post-secondary non-tertiary education. Work-based Learning forms an integral part of the programmes.
- Tertiary education is provided by universities and polytechnics (*escolas politécnicas*).

Furthermore, various opportunities for adults exist to follow VET. One of these opportunities is the *Qualifica* process which leads to the certification of formal, non-formal and informal competences. This *Qualifica* process is the input for charting an individualised approach to adult education in VET, allowing one to focus specifically on the modules needed to complete a formal qualification. For most adults, this means enrolling in general education courses to complete the formal qualification track in which they already gained work experience, but it may include both education and professional courses as well. The learning outcomes and qualifications do not distinguish between the mode of delivery, and many of the education providers working as *Qualifica* Centres offer both IVET and CVET courses. Despite such institutional overlaps however, these tend to be provided to learners relatively separately, at different times and intensity, often with specific teaching staff for either stream.

Part 2: Further analysis of the selected policy development and the direction of travel

This part further elaborates on the selected policy. It aims to understand better the context of the policy and the drivers behind the policy development, both within the VET system and outside of the VET system.

In this part, we are interested in obtaining an in-depth understanding on how the policy affected the IVET-CVET relationship and why. In this, illustrate the discussions with reflections from the **two sectors selected** (Industrial Manufacturing and the Retail sector).

Problem statement and objective of the reform/ change

Please describe the background (problem statement) of the policy change/reform that impacted the relationship between IVET and CVET (or that impacted the opening up of IVET for adults), and the overall goal and policy orientation and how this relates to the problem statement. Reflect on the following guiding questions:

- What are the key challenges that the selected policy development seek to overcome?
 - What are the underlying causes of these key challenges?
 - What are the external drivers outside the VET system (Political, Environmental, Social, Technological, Legal and Economic factors)
 - What are internal drivers and trends inside the VET system that called for policy development?
 - What are the objectives of the selected policy development?
 - How do such objectives relate to the challenge(s)?
-

This report presents in more detail the reforms that influenced the involvement of IVET providers in the learning of adults. The policy reforms initiated over the last decades should be seen in the challenging context of a persisting 'qualification deficit' in Portugal, which has called for further attention for upskilling of the workforce.

Historically Portugal has had a comparatively high share of the working population with no or low qualifications. In 2005, where we start the review of policy reforms in this paper, the share of people in the workforce with low-level or no qualification (ISCED levels 0-2) was 73.7%¹. In the years since this figure has substantially improved and measured 44.6% in 2020. Despite this drastic improvement however, even today, the comparative share in Portugal of persons with no / low qualifications remains the highest within the EU. At the same time, professional education in Portugal is still recuperating from the negative reputation of vocational education in the years before the democratisation. While this broad perception is being targeted with subsequent reforms, it remains difficult to erase from generations schooled in the 1970s. In this context, the dominance of micro, small or medium sized companies in the

¹ Eurostat – (EDAT_LFSE_03), 25-64 year old.

Portuguese is yet another factor that contributes to this. Many employers of this size do not prioritise education and training for their workers, mainly because education and training leads to more general competences that are not directly applied to specific professional tasks. As a result also today, many workers are low educated and trained².

A second related policy challenge consists of comparatively high rates at which young people were leaving school early or dropping out. In 2005, the share of early school leavers was 34.5%, which is relatively at par with other Southern European Member States, but considerably above the European Average. In response, in these years the first national policies to address early school leaving were launched, which are since integrated in the framework of the Europe 2020 strategy, where Portugal committed itself to reducing early school leaving to 10%.

Against this background, the relation between CVET and IVET was not particularly defined. Up until the late 1990s, adult education policy was seen primarily through the lens of formal second-chance education. This approach builds on the assumption that adults needed to accomplish compulsory education (of 9 years), as criterion for becoming democratic and participative citizens in a free society that fosters equality³. Since the end of the 1990s, education policies have increasingly prioritised the link between (adult) education and economic development⁴. This also inspired further policy attention to the professional part (job-specific skills) of CVET provision and its links to IVET. It is reflected in national strategic reference frameworks and adult education national policies that focused on a closer embeddedness of skills, solidifying the link between education and labour market and the ambition to increase Portuguese economic competitiveness through raising workers' skills.

The economic and financial crisis that hit Portugal in the years after 2008 also had a profound effect on the design and implementation of adult learning in the country. It contributed to a severe limitation of resources for support of adult learning, which also informed the decision to scale down ambitions for national adult learning policies in 2012. The New Opportunities programme was abandoned (see below), the existing adult education centres were shut down and number of adult educators considerably reduced. Severe financial cuts were observed, which led to a decrease in adult learners enrolled and certified by existing forms of provision such as basic and secondary education.

Against this background, a variety of policies in the field of IVET and CVET were formulated in Portugal. Various publications underline how policies over the last two decades have not always followed a consistent line of reasoning; while policies continue to highlight the importance of participation in adult learning for instance, funding cuts administered as part of a broader austerity package achieved quite the opposite. Also, different approaches and prioritisation of innovating IVET / CVET by subsequent governments, coupled with a

² See Instituto Nacional de Estatística (2013). *Aprendizagem ao Longo da Vida. Inquérito à Educação e Formação de Adultos 2011*. Lisboa: Instituto Nacional de Estatística, Ministério do Trabalho e Solidariedade Social/Gabinete de Estratégia e Planeamento (2009). *Inquérito ao Impacte das Ações de Formação Profissional 2005-2007*. Lisboa: Ministério do Trabalho e Solidariedade Social/Gabinete de Estratégia e Planeamento, and Ministério da Economia e do Emprego/Gabinete de Estratégia e Estudos (2013). *Inquérito ao Impacto das Ações de Formação Profissional nas Empresas*. Lisboa: Ministério da Economia e do Emprego/Gabinete de Estratégia e Estudos.

³ See for instance P. Guimarães (2017), Country report, developed as input for the independent national experts' network in the area of adult education/adult skills.

⁴ See Lima, L. C. & Guimarães, P. (2015). Portugal: policy and adult education. In T. Corner (ed.), *Education in the European Union Pre-2003-Member States*. London: Bloomsbury, pp. 245-263.

substantial dependence on European funds to finance the sector means that it is difficult to discern a longer-term objective⁵. Because of this, we define below only two higher-level objectives that structure the overall approach. In the subsequent section, more attention will be given to identifying the more specific objectives that are defined to structure the more specific policy work.

- First of all, a key objective against the persistence of low qualification levels among the Portuguese workforce has been increasing the participation rate in adult education. This objective is reflected in European-level policy commitments, as well as the specific national strategic reference framework developed in response to the economic and financial crisis.
- Secondly, the increasing attention for the economic value of education of adults, and linking of adult education to economic development, productivity growth and competitiveness since the 2000s also contributed to a shift in priorities in the content of IVET/CVET programmes. The development of IVET and CVET programmes have increasingly focused on prioritising job-specific skills, with less attention for general education aspects compared to the more transversal aspects. This development should however always be seen against a strong traditional undercurrent in the Portuguese education system (in all education streams) that builds on general education.
- Against these two broader objectives, one could identify an overall ambition to increase the flexibility of provision. Through a variety of policies (see next section), Portugal has prioritised the modular provision of IVET and CVET programmes. This should contribute to the objective of increasing participation (reducing a possible barrier to participation), but also contribute to offering more relevant education and training; the logic is that through modularised IVET and CVET programmes, learners will only need to enrol for the modules they need.

⁵ P. Guimarães (2012), A educação e formação de adultos (1999-2010), Revista Lusófona de Educação, 22, 69-84.

Change process and (institutional) context

Please describe what actions were taken and how these led to developments in the relationship between IVET and CVET (or that led to changes in the opening up of IVET for adults). Also discuss the policy change/ reform in more practical terms, such as whether it was accompanied by financial budget (or not) and which actors were involved in the roll-out and what was their role related to opening up IVET to adults. Reflect on the following guiding questions:

- What broad set of actions / activities were conducted in order to achieve the objectives?
 - What is the mechanism of change linking the inputs to output/outcomes and long-term goals?
 - What is the underpinning theory / line of thinking that justifies the chosen change process?
 - What is in broad terms the (financial and human resource) input related to the selected policy development?
 - What is the timeline associated with reaching the objectives?
 - What actors are involved in the change process, what is their role? In particular, what role do IVET providers play?
-

This report reviews the more specific content of policy responses to the challenges and objectives identified in the previous section. For this analysis, the report goes back to 2005 with the launch of the New Opportunities programme, which focused on the need for economic and educational convergence to countries that were further advanced on these aspects⁶. Under the initiative, around 450 local education centres were established across Portugal, most of these in existing education providers. The core offer of these centres is to facilitate entry to education and training courses on the basis of recognition of prior learning⁷. The programme offered potential learners ‘a new opportunity’ to complete compulsory education and to achieve a professional qualification. Through the centres, learners were offered the opportunity to enrol in vocational courses provided in public schools and in vocational training centers. Instead of merely expanding programmes or access to education, the differential of the initiative has been to support the recognition of prior learning, thereby reducing possible barriers to learning and possible duplications, while also attached due value to the competences gained in prior employment through informal and non-formal learning. This allows learners to focus on the courses and course elements that they would need to complete a formal qualification, for instance after initially dropping out of education.

The developments around the New Opportunities Programme cannot be seen in isolation from the broader education reforms, and more specifically of VET in Portugal initiated by the National Qualification System since 2007⁸. Under this package, Portugal sought to promote a

⁶ See for instance P. Guimarães and C. Menitra. Validation of non-formal and informal learning and career guidance: Programa Qualifica.

⁷ For more details, see Agência Nacional para a Qualificação (2011). Linhas Orientadoras para o Futuro da Iniciativa Novas Oportunidades. 30 de Novembro de 2010. Lisboa: Agência Nacional para a Qualificação.

⁸ Decree Law no. 396/2007, of the 31st of December 2007.

broader attainment of secondary education as a minimum level of qualification in Portugal. The framework formalises the position of so-called qualifications with double certification, which brings together the previously fragmented provision of VET⁹. These double-certification qualifications consist of separate education and professional certifications comprising general, scientific, technological and workbased learning components. An explicit objective of the establishment of the national qualification system was to strengthen the links between general and professional education, as well as introducing certification mechanisms into the system that allows to recognise school and professional competencies acquired in informal and non-formal ways.

The education certificate enables permeability with general programmes (it has the same legal value as any other way of obtaining school certification), while the professional certificate are stepping stones that can be complemented on the basis of prior learning, or be used for further practical learning. This duality is particularly relevant in the context of a large share of the workforce without formal qualifications (and particularly those that enrol in New Opportunity Centres to work towards a formal qualification), because it allows second-chance education to focus on specifically those types of learning outcomes that are missing.

An explicit third objective of the introduction of the National Qualification System in 2007 was to promote further flexibility of the training offer, to make it increasingly possible for working adults to progress at the education and professional levels. This flexibility is offered by structuring education into blocks of short duration learning units ('unidade de formação de curto duração'). The logic is that through shorter blocks, adults have more opportunities to access education, and enrol in the courses that are specifically relevant to their situations. Again, the New Opportunities Centres can play an important facilitating role in this.

All of the above directly impacts the relation between IVET and CVET by reducing barriers between the two. It has the same legal value as any other way of obtaining school certification. It allows learners to pursue further studies in other forms of provision of the national education and training system, and professional qualification.

In response to the economic and financial crisis, financial support for the New Opportunities Programme was reduced and effectively ended by 2012. By then, the network of New Opportunities Centres were replaced by centres for qualification and vocational education - *Centros para a Qualificação e o Ensino Profissional - CQEP* ⁽¹⁰⁾. While these formally had the ambition to further upgrade and improve processes for validation of learning, these had to absorb a substantial scaling down of financial support, effectively suspending most operations in most centres. From the 450 New Opportunities Centres, only around 200 remained in operation, often with scaled-down ambitions and a considerably reduced number of adult educators.

Funding returned to support expanding adult learning policies in 2017, when the Qualifica programme was announced, mainly with support from the ESF. The main objective of the programme was to increase participation in adult learning, which had taken a serious blow after the 2012 austerity measures. By 2022, a total of 319 centres were operational in all

⁹ See for instance OECD (2020), *Strengthening the governance of Skills Systems: Case study: Portugal's National Agency for Qualification and Vocational Education and Training (ANQEP)*.

⁽¹⁰⁾ Portaria n.º 135-A/2013, 28.03.

regions. These centres are not all similar in size and structure and may be hosted by different types of organisations. In September 2017, 300 centres were operational, of which most of these operated in public schools and in vocational education and training centres under the Institute of Employment and Vocational Education and Training. A few centres were in very diverse institutions, including in civil society organisations such as third sector, social solidarity and local development associations. The existing centres can carry out recognition of prior learning leading to school certification.

In terms of the methods for guidance and validation activities, the Qualifica centers that have come to replace the CQEP centres (active between 2013-2016) operated in a largely similar way as its predecessors, though a main difference has the increased support for teaching and guidance staff. Another minor difference is the increase attention for guidance of individuals, as evidenced for instance in the introduction of ‘Qualifica-passports’, which allows online access to an individual profile that records past educational and training experiences as input for identifying possible further learning scenarios in a flexible way¹¹. Not every centre offers the entire spectrum of education and training; each centre specialises in certain fields of training or in specific professional qualifications. Formally, the Centres themselves are not an education provider; they offer the guidance and validation activities, which are in principle free of charge. However, a majority function in an integrated way within VET providers or secondary (vocational) schools, which ensures a close link between the guidance and education offer. The network of Qualifica centres is managed by the ANQEP, the national agency for qualifications¹².

The renewal of the network of Qualifica Centres is accompanied by broader system reforms as well. Since 2017, the National Qualification Framework was substantially revised and now accommodates a national credit system for vocational education and training. This credit system provides yet another step to increased mobility and flexibility in the qualification pathways and to value individual lifelong learning pathways¹³. The allocation of credits to all individual education and training modules further helps both access and transparency of the training offer, which is a way to overcome participation barriers in CVET.

Results and impact of the policy (if possible)

Please discuss any developments in the relationship between IVET and CVET (and the opening up of IVET to adults) resulting from the policy change/ reform. Reflect on the following guiding questions:

- What is known about the results and impact?
 - How did it affect the learning of adults and the engagement of IVET providers?
-

The policies described in the previous section contribute to such broader national objectives that it remains difficult to pinpoint a clear causal link. Despite this limitation, some system level improvements of VET in the country can be observed. First of all, the share of VET students

¹¹ <https://www.passaportequalifica.gov.pt/cicLogin.xhtml>

¹² <https://anqep.gov.pt/np4/home.html>

¹³ Decreto-Lei nº 14/2017, 26.01.

among upper-secondary level has risen from 20 to just below 40 percent, which signals how the sector is increasingly able to reduce its historically negative connotation. The new education pathways created by the subsequent reforms (New Opportunities Initiative, Qualifica system) also seem to have had a positive contribution to the developments in early school leaving. This has significantly decreased in the last two decades from 44 percent to 9 percent.

The VET sector continues to be dominated by younger learners, with overall 69 percent of all individuals in between 15-19 years old, while 20 percent are aged between 20-24 and only 11 percent are aged 25 and above. Participation in formal adult education and non-formal education is moderately high, with levels of activity well below the Scandinavian countries but on par with most Southern European Member States. In 2016, per capita (25–64-year-old), 61 hours of learning activities were estimated, with 26 hours spent in formal adult education, and 35 hours spent in non-formal adult education. Most of the (formal) adult learning takes place at the level of higher education, with still considerable scope for making use of the increased flexibility of modularised dual certification qualifications.

Existing evaluations of the subsequent initiatives to combine guidance and validation of prior learning with modularised learning show promising results. An evaluation of the New Opportunities programme for instance identified that adult learners benefitted from the aims of the adult education policy implemented from 2005 to 2011 and were eager to attend the forms of provision existing, such as recognition of prior learning and adult education and training courses¹⁴. Also, the reach of the expansive network of New Opportunities centres across the whole country, and flexible opening hours allowing support during the day and at night for working individuals further contributed to an effective increase during the years of the New Opportunities programme. The period between the New Opportunities programme and its resurrection through Qualifica saw a (minor) decline in participation in adult learning, which is another indication of the possible role that these local centres may have played in reducing barriers to participation¹⁵.

¹⁴ Carneiro, R. (dir.) (2011). Accreditation of Prior Learning as a Lever for Lifelong Learning: Lessons Learnt from the New Opportunities Initiative, Portugal. Braga: UNESCO/MENON/CEPCEP, quoted in Guimarães, P. (2017), Country report, developed as input for the independent national experts network in the area of adult education/adult skills.

¹⁵ Measured when comparing the participation in adult learning in the last 4 weeks (as measured by the Labour Force Survey for 18-64 years).

Part 3: Changed epistemological and pedagogical perspective

This part analyses the epistemological and pedagogical perspective of the adult learning offer in focus of the case study. Vocational education is rooted in distinctive modes of production, representation, use and transfer of knowledge, which can be associated with particular ways of teaching and learning. This part will analyse this perspective and also track developments and changes over time, linking these changes and developments to the selected policy development. A central question is the following: **How did the changes in the role IVET providers play in providing learning to adults, as influenced by the policy developments, affect the content of learning and the way adults are trained?** To answer this (final) question, the following questions in this part serve as guidance.

The previous section has shown how various reforms sought to contribute to an increase in participation of adult learners in CVET. A majority of the centres that feature as New Opportunity, CQEP, and Qualifica centres are secondary education providers, which means that there is an institutional link between IVET and the CVET offered as part of these initiatives. Many of the centres offer both IVET and CVET, and the learning outcomes defined for the individual modules, or dual certification qualifications are fully identical. The differences lie in the delivery mechanism, which can be through formal professional programmes, apprenticeships (both more often associated with IVET), or the recognition, validation and certification of prior learning, and modularised offer of professional programmes (which are more often associated with CVET).

The policies mentioned above have not had major implications for *the role IVET providers play in providing learning to adults*. Learning outcomes of VET qualifications are identical for adults as for initial learners, and differences in delivery mechanism tend to be more practical in nature. Training hours tend to be different for modules targeted at adults (at night, part-time training in specific training modules as opposed to fulltime daytime professional courses) and in most institutions the teaching staff is also dedicated to either teaching professional courses (IVET) or modularised education (generally CVET). While it is not impossible to find centres where the organisation of teaching and learning is more combined, this is the exception rather than the rule.

The increased attention for modularised education, for instance through the formalisation of a credit system for individual modules, and increased support for Qualifica Centres since 2017 seem to have contributed to an increase in the number of adults that enrol in training. Effectiveness in achieving this objectives has direct effects on the centres, and the way they operate. Practically, as increased numbers of adult learners engage in validation processes and enrol in training in a centre, the local centres – often with limited resources – have more capacities to hire additional adult educators, thus further reducing overlaps in the teaching body between IVET and CVET. This means that success may contribute to reduce (institutional) overlaps between IVET and CVET and increasingly specialise adult education to the specific needs of adults. Against this perspective, it is also relevant to highlight that the

number of learners in modular training has been relatively small, particularly in the years 2013-2017. In those years, the layoffs of adult educators from the various training providers may have forced institutions to combine classes. It is however clear that this is not a deliberate policy choice and instead an unintended consequence.

If we look at the provision of non-formal VET, there are by definition less institutional links with the formal IVET sector. While there are organisations active in formal education – including VET institutions – that also provide VET to adults, this is a relatively small share, with around 8,5 percent of all hours in non-formal adult learning. In contrast, 26 percent of all hours in non-formal adult learning are provided by dedicated CVET providers (for profit/non-profit, employer organisations, trade unions), which play no significant role in providing fundamental VET.

Part 4: Conclusions and reflections

This part concludes the case study with some summative and formative reflections. For this the following questions serve as guidance:

- (i) How did the changes in the role IVET providers play in providing learning to adults, as influenced by the policy developments, affect the content of learning and the way adults are trained?
- (ii) How will the role IVET providers play in providing learning to adults develop in the future? What does the case study tell us in terms of the direction of travel?

The case study has highlighted the efforts to strengthen the component of VET in the adult education provision. The key of the Portuguese approach has been to do so through the development of assessment, tailored provision, and certification of acquired competences. Through these efforts, policy reforms of adult education have attempted to edge away from the legacy of a former school system which saw high proportions of low qualified adults and relatively high shares of early school leavers.

The drive for increased flexibility and transparency in qualification systems is reflected in recent policy developments for adult education. The shift from centres for qualification and vocational education - *Centros para a Qualificação e o Ensino Profissional - CQEP* ⁽¹⁶⁾, which replaced the network of New Opportunities centres in 2014, and which themselves were followed by the *Qualifica* centres in 2017, accompanies broader trends in the national qualification system. These centres bring together the recognition, validation and certification processes with the actual provision of certified training activities, which can consequently be more targeted to individual needs. These reforms are embedded in more structural changes to the National Qualifications System¹⁷. The introduction of a national credit system for vocational education and training¹⁸, enabled the broader rollout of modularisation in vocation education and training, allowing increased mobility and flexibility in the provision of vocational education in Portugal, particularly also for the target group of the *Qualifica* centers, i.e. low qualified young people and adults. When reviewing particularly those elements that affect the role IVET providers play in adult learning, the case study showed that the *content of learning* has not been much affected by the policies and broader developments in adult learning and VET more broadly. Education providers that have a role in IVET are also involved in adult education, and the learning outcomes of dual professional and educational certificates that make up relevant qualifications are identical for learners enrolling in professional (IVET) courses and adults in modular education programmes alike.

Rather than focus on the content, the recent policy reforms have sought to contribute to an *increased demand* for adult education, by increasing flexibility of provision and seeking for a better link to individual needs. While there are no conclusive evaluations of the combined package of policy reforms in the last years, since 2017 a positive trend in the participation in adult learning programmes has emerged again, following years with a more negative trend

⁽¹⁶⁾ Portaria n.º 135-A/2013, 28.03.

⁽¹⁷⁾ Decreto-Lei n.º 14/2017, 26.01. “

⁽¹⁸⁾ Decreto-lei n.º 47/2017, 01.02 (also regulates the *Qualifica* Passport).

(2012-2017) when only limited funding was able to sustain the sector. This has implications for the delivery of adult education courses, specifically in CVET, because increased student numbers may also mean that the Qualifica centres will increasingly have the means (or even necessity) to dedicate specific staff members to teaching modular education, which is more often attended by adults. In principle the part-time modular education that is generally attended by adults is already offered separated from full-time professional courses, but austerity measures in the years after the economic and financial crisis in 2008 has forced many training centres to reconsider the delivery of modular education programmes.

At this moment there are no indications that this trend, in which the delivery to adults becomes more specialised to the specific training needs of adults is changed. However, trends for the future of Portuguese VET policy, and for adult education in particular are highly dependent on external funding (mainly from ESF). This also means that each transition from one EU budget period to the next, major changes to the design of adult education policy are not only possible, but have been common, particularly when combined with a change in government. This adds a factor of uncertainty and limited sustainability that also applies to the relation between IVET and CVET.

Annex to case study report

List of sources

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List of interviewees/ informants

Country	Name	Organisation and function	Contact information (Email, phone)	Date of interview	Agreement* – yes/no
Portugal	Paula da Encarnação Oliveira Guimarães	Professora Auxiliar – Instituto de Educação, Universidade Lisboa	pguimaraes@ie.u lisboa.pt	April 29, 2022	yes

ANNEX 1: Clarification of key terms

IVET and CVET: main differences

This work assignment focuses on the relationship between IVET and CVET and how IVET and CVET sub-systems interact to facilitate lifelong and life-wide learning. In order to understand the interplay between IVET and CVET first, the two key concepts need clarification.

The Cedefop glossary does not provide a definition of initial VET, but refers to **Initial Education and Training**, being: ‘general or vocational education and training carried out in the initial education system, usually before entering working life. Some training undertaken after entry into working life may be considered as initial training (such as retraining). Initial education and training can be carried out at any level in general or vocational education (full-time school-based or alternance training) or apprenticeship pathways.’ (Cedefop & Tissot, P., 2014, p. 51). Both IVET and CVET are offered by education and training providers and the same providers can offer both IVET and CVET, but this is not necessarily the case. In many countries, the demarcation between IVET and CVET is not always so clear cut (for example in Ireland, France, Finland, and the UK). In these countries, IVET and CVET tend to offer the same qualifications (for EQF levels 3 to 8). National systems of validation of prior learning, together with qualifications frameworks, have helped to bring together the two sub-systems. Elsewhere, the distinction between IVET and CVET may be based on different demarcation lines. For example:

- (a) system and funding-based distinction: e.g. IVET being state-funded, CVET not;
- (b) age-based distinction: e.g. IVET for learners up to 25 years old;
- (c) qualification-based distinction: e.g. IVET offers full qualifications, CVET only certificates;
- (d) provider-based distinction: e.g. IVET offered by public schools, CVET by companies or private providers.

In order to facilitate transitions into further learning, an effective offer of CVET needs to be in place. But what is understood by ‘CVET’? The previous project revealed that there are many dominant conceptions of CVET in European countries and the use of the term CVET is not consistent, sometimes not even within countries (Cedefop, 2019a p. 80). Internationally, CVET is explained as ‘education or training after initial education or entry into working life, aimed at helping individuals to improve or update their knowledge and/or skills; acquire new skills for a career move or retraining; continue their personal or professional development’ (Cedefop & Tissot, P., 2014, p. 51). In that sense, CVET is basically a part of adult learning oriented towards professional development. CVET generally aims to update competences needed in the labour market or society. Given this broad aim, CVET can be understood as (Cedefop, 2019b, p. 80):

- (a) job-related/occupation-specific formal education and training for adults;
- (b) job-related/occupation-specific formal and non-formal education and training for adults;
- (c) as (part) of further education and training or lifelong learning for adults.

In most EU Member States CVET is interpreted as vocational education for adults: CVET often refers to education and training that is carried out after initial regular formal education.

The target group of CVET comprises persons in the labour market, often defined by age: for example, in Bulgaria, persons over 16 years old, no longer in formal education.

The Changing Nature and Role of VET study also mentions that CVET is increasingly understood as being integrated into the lifelong learning perspective (Cedefop, 2019b, p.85). In addition to this, with diversification of the levels at which VET can be situated, CVET – as an orientation rather than a system – can be found in higher education (HE) as well. The Cedefop study on VET at higher levels concludes that there has been expansion and diversification of vocationally oriented education and training offered at higher levels in European countries over the last two decades (Cedefop, 2019a, p. 10). Furthermore, it mentions that there is no clear separation between continuing VET and higher VET. In the Netherlands, for example, the current debates relate to making higher education more flexible and accessible for non-traditional students and increasing the role of HE institutions (mainly Universities of Applied Science) in lifelong learning. This includes experimentation with the part-time higher education pathway, flexibilisation in paying college fees, experimentation in demand-side funding, and applying a more modular approach to higher education programmes. Experiments are currently being conducted on all those topics which should inform future policy development (Cedefop, 2019b, p. 109).

CVET contains a wide diversity of learning activities. CVET can include short term activities of one or two hours as well as much longer ones running over months or even longer. In addition, it presents an almost limitless diversity of content, starting with training in health-and-safety, updates on new products, tutorials for using new machines up to the presentation of cutting-edge research. Also, the settings of provision differ, be it in the workplace as for on-the-job training, or the classroom or a hotel resort hosting an international conference. Finally, uptake of forms of CVET are determined by completely different social or institutional processes.

CVET needs to be approached both as a specific part of the education system or – to use a term with a more encompassing meaning – skill formation systems (Thelen, 2008) as well as the employment system (Fligstein, 2001; Marsden, 1999). And even more, CVET should be seen as an orientation within other (educational) sectors compared to a specific system or sub-sector. This approach of referring to CVET as an orientation rather than a sector is further informed by the following considerations: Firstly, it is difficult to strictly distinguish between academic/general skills provision, vocational skills provision and/or transversal competence provision; and secondly, it is assumed that all skills and competences learned later in life will have some value in relation to the objective of CVET ('aimed at helping individuals to improve or update their knowledge and/or skills; acquire new 'skills for a career move or retraining; continue their personal or professional development').

IVET providers

Besides clarifying how this Work Assignment understands the difference between IVET and CVET and how it operationalises CVET (as different orientations in the learning of adults, rather than a separate system), the study also relies heavily on the conceptualisation of IVET providers. In many countries, outside of apprenticeship systems, IVET is provided by State-funded organisations such as VET colleges and technical colleges. Besides the State-funded institutions, there are also private providers being active in IVET, usually operating with State

funding as well. Apprenticeship systems are provided through on the job training of companies and off-the job training provided by VET providers or training institutions. The latter could be operated by sectoral organisations or other labour market institutions (Cedefop, 2008). While this will be further refined on the basis of work assignment 2, as a starting point, this work assignment will look at the national context to determine what is considered an IVET provider. This is in most cases a public IVET provider, but can also be the employer (in apprenticeship systems).

CVET conceptualisation

In line with definitions of initial and continuing education and training, this work assignment sees the distinction between IVET and CVET in that IVET is aimed at younger learners and offers them vocationally oriented education and training before they enter working life. CVET on the other hand is aimed at older learners and offers them education and training after they entered working life. In this explanation of CVET, a wider perspective is taken towards 'education and training', not being confined solely to 'vocationally oriented education and training'. This because the learning needs of adult learners already in the labour market, in line with the definition of 'adult education', vary widely, while still being relevant for their labour market position ⁽¹⁹⁾. They might lack specific basic skills, or a formal (secondary education qualification) which they need to progress in their work; also, they might lack occupation specific skills and competences, or an occupation specific qualification. We therefore propose in this work assignment to not make a distinction on the basis of existing education sub-systems and sectors, but to apply a broad concept of CVET operationalised as the learning of adults after leaving initial education. In this, the focus is on job/occupation (or labour market) relevant learning, but it is not neglecting the acquisition of key competences, or socially relevant adult learning (e.g. basic skills training). Furthermore, the focus is on learning that is in some way organised, irrespective of whether it leads to a formal qualification (formal education) or not (non-formal education). This conceptualisation entails that CVET provision crosses different 'traditional' education sectors, including adult learning sub-systems, higher education, general education, and IVET if they provide learning for adults after leaving initial education that is somehow related to job/occupation (or labour market) relevant learning.

Hence, CVET needs to be regarded both as an umbrella term for rather different forms of educational provision as well as a key part of skill formation and employment systems,

⁽¹⁹⁾ It is fully acknowledged that the societal understanding of what being an adult signifies has certainly changed since the 1970s, when today's still used definitions of adult education had been coined Mortimer, J.T. and Moen, P. (2016). The changing social construction of age and the life course: Precarious identity and enactment of 'early' and 'encore' Stages of Adulthood. In: Springer, Vol. pp. 111-129. The phase of youth and young adulthood has been expanded, with some markers of adulthood (e.g. leaving the parents' home, marriage, having a first child) significantly delayed compared to the 1970s, although there are important cross-country differences. Settersten JR, R.A., et al. (2015). Becoming adult: Meanings of markers to adulthood. *Emerging trends in the social and behavioral sciences: An interdisciplinary, searchable, and linkable resource*, pp. 1-16. Today, young adults up to 24 are expected to either pursue education, or combine phases of education (including higher education) and gainful work or seen as entitled to return to education in case they have left initial education prematurely (e.g. prior to completing upper secondary education as in the Early School Leaver (ESL) framework). In many countries, a dedicated system of educational provision targeting young adults (up to 25) has emerged, which offer programmes different from initial education but still more attuned to the needs of socialisation than programmes targeting fully grown up people.

provided mainly by employers and linked to established forms of breaking down work processes in particular jobs, comprising particular tasks and with particular skill profiles. Jobs can be organised mainly according to organisational needs or to established, standardised occupations. CVET is intimately linked to existing workplaces and occupational structures; it allows both for the necessary updating of an individual's skill profile to changing socio-technological requirements and for the preparation of individuals to master the demands of new jobs and attaining more demanding, advanced positions in particular.

This CVET orientation can be found in different sub-systems and sectors. A key question is therefore how CVET, or the learning of adults, is supported within the different sub-systems and sectors, whether these be IVET, general education, higher education, employment/PES policies or (liberal) adult education (²⁰).

For the purpose of this work assignment and its wider approach to CVET (as the learning of adults after leaving initial education), we apply the following four clusters of orientations in CVET and what IVET providers could be involved in when facilitating the learning of adults:

1. **VET leading to acquisition of specific vocational/ occupation-specific skills and not leading to a formal qualification:** this relates to vocational courses and programmes not leading to a formally recognised qualification. This can include specific courses, training workshops etc. They aim at the acquisition of specific skills and possibly of a credential that has a value in the professional field. These VET courses can be linked to formal VET qualifications in the form of for instance specific modules or certificates. It can also include ALMP and more liberal adult education provision.
2. **VET leading to a formal qualification:** this relates to VET programmes at ISCED level 2, 3, and 4 (EQF 2-4). The aim is to obtain a formal education qualification, allowing further learning as well as preparing for labour market re-entry or increasing opportunities for higher level jobs or shifting jobs between sectors. This can also include higher level VET: ISCED 5 (EQF 5) or higher having the aim to obtain a higher (vocational) education formal qualification, opening up further formal learning pathways. This can be organised in an integrated way with IVET or organised separately for adults, having a distinct qualification structure, and distinct structure of delivery.
3. **Basic skills training:** this relates to basic skills courses aimed at solving a skills deficiency in specific basic skills such as literacy, numeracy and digital skills. This can include training courses being part of active labour market policies offered by VET providers and personal or social learning courses offered by VET providers.
4. **General education tracks (academic tracks and second chance):** this relates to formal qualifications for adult learners that are either regarded as second chance programmes or programmes that are aimed at obtaining access to higher education.

⁽²⁰⁾ The 2019 synthesis report on Adult Learning in the EU 28 Member States mapped the following relevant legal frameworks covering adult learning as well as CVET in European countries: Adult education laws; General education laws; VET laws; Higher education laws; Labour laws / PES; Other (e.g. on NQF, specific targeted laws on migrant integration). See: (Ecorys, 2019 p. 45).

Given these four broad orientations, it needs to be stressed that an IVET institution can offer CVET forms within different orientations: They may offer vocationally-oriented CVET (leading to a qualification or not) and also general subjects and basic skills training.

The figure provides a more detailed overview.

Figure 1. **CVET conceptualisation and clustering (including forms and other names as mentioned in previously discussed categorisations)**

		Has an explicit vocational/ occupation-specific focus			
Does not result in formal qualification	<p>Orientation 1. VET leading to acquisition of specific vocational/ occupation-specific skills and not leading to a formal qualification</p> <p>Forms / other names:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Post-secondary VET (not leading to a qualification) • Training that forms part of Active Labour Market Policies (occupation oriented) • Workplace or job-related learning • Continuing Professional Education Governed by Professional Bodies (not leading to a qualification) 	<p>Orientation 2. VET leading to a formal qualification</p> <p>Forms / other names:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Post-secondary VET (leading to a qualification) • Apprenticeships • (Occupational) (Re)Training Programmes • Customised Vocational and Professional Programmes for Organisations • (Post-Tertiary) Continuing Higher Education (oriented to occupational knowledge) • Continuing Professional Education Governed by Professional Bodies (leading to a qualification) 	Results in formal qualification		
	<p>Orientation 3. Basic skills training</p> <p>Forms / other names:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Basic skills and basic education • Training that forms part of Active Labour Market Policies (basic skills oriented) • Personal or social learning 	<p>Orientation 4. General education tracks (academic tracks and second chance)</p> <p>Forms / other names:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Second chance education at upper secondary levels / Basic Skills and Remedy Programmes • Higher Education Programmes Accessible to Non-Traditional (Adult) Students • (Post-Tertiary) Continuing Higher Education (oriented to more general knowledge) 			
		Does not have an explicit vocational/ occupation-specific focus			

Source: Authors.

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