

# **Business and welfare: Employers' organisations and Vocational Education and Training in the EU<sup>1</sup>**

*Policy paper*

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Adam Šumichrast, Lucia Kováčová and Marta Kahancová  
Central European Labour Studies Institute  
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## **Key findings**

- The policy design, character of involvement of stakeholders in policy-making and implementation of the Vocational Education and Training (VET) policies varies across the EU countries. It also appears that the effectiveness of the **VET policies strongly depends on the character and quality of interactions between the stakeholders in the labour market and school systems that play critical roles in addressing the coherence of skill supply and demand (Bolli et al., 2018).**
- In the five studied countries (Denmark, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, and Slovakia), the VET policies are discussed mainly in the context of the changing labour market needs associated with global or country-specific labour market trends such as **digitalisation, automation, green transition, shortage of skilled workers in specific occupations, or intensifying needs for labour market inclusion of youth and other vulnerable groups.**
- The VET policies that appear to be in the spotlight of the policy dialogue in the studied countries embrace primarily school-based or work-based measures facilitating **(1) school-to-work transition and (2) continuous vocational education and re-training at the workplace.**
- **As for the school-to-work transition policies,** the employers' policy priorities present mainly fostering the quality and extending the number of apprenticeships, improving the system of financial incentives for VET providers, and mostly reinforcing the role and autonomy of employers in policy design and implementation of school-to-work transition measures. **In regards to the continuous education and training,** the employers typically

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<sup>1</sup> This policy paper is part of the research project [BAWEU-Business and welfare. Preferences and collective action in Europe](#) (Project No. VS/2020/0141, funded by the European Union). The project explored employers' welfare preferences and their political action, including interactions with trade unions and governments in the EU with a special focus on Denmark, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, and Slovakia.

reiterate the need to adapt skills for the digitalisation with a special focus on older or low-skilled workers.

- **The employers' organisations (EOs) engage in policy-making or policy dialogue over the VET policies through multiple ways, including tri-partite or bipartite bodies at the national, sectoral or regional levels or other institutes established specifically in regard to improving the quality of the VET system.** The interactions and bargaining take place not only between traditional social partners but also other school-level stakeholders, expert communities, or regional governments, and other stakeholders at the different levels of governance.
- **The BAWEU Employers' Survey findings** show that medium-sized and large companies are more likely to be engaged in implementation of the VET schemes than smaller companies, and these types of companies also tend to be more engaged with key stakeholders over these schemes in the policy dialogue.

## Introduction

Vocational Education and Training (hereinafter 'VET') plays a pivotal role in the development of human capital of the workforce and, thus, is critical for facilitating competitiveness of enterprises and increasing productivity. In the last decades, the importance of the VET has been rising due to the changing labour markets needs associated mostly with automation, digitalisation, and the green transition. Consequently, the VET poses a policy priority for the representatives of the workforce, business companies, the state apparatus, and other stakeholders that are engaged in policy making over the VET. **This policy brief examines the attitudes of employers' organisations<sup>2</sup> in five EU Member States (Denmark, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, and Slovakia) towards the VET policies, their strategies to engage in the policy making process over the VET policies, and the way they interact with other key stakeholders.** This paper focuses on two primary categories of the VET policies that are relevant in the studied countries, namely: **(1) school-to-work transition policies (apprenticeships, internships, dual education, etc.) and (2) continuous vocational education (re-education and re-qualification schemes, and continuous learning delivered on and off the workplace).**

Findings presented in this policy brief are based on **(1) the desk research, (2) qualitative interviews<sup>3</sup>** (November 2021 – June 2022) with the representatives of social partners and (mainly employers and employers' organisations) in all five studied countries, and **(3) online survey** (May 2021 – February 2022) that was also carried out in all five countries among the representatives of business companies with a special

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<sup>2</sup> The term employers' organisation encompasses different organisational forms representing employers' interests, including employers' associations.

<sup>3</sup> Interviews in five EU Member States were concluded between November 2021 and June 2022. The number of interviewees is as follows: Denmark: 13; Germany: 9; Italy: 17; Netherlands: 19; Slovakia: 15. See Colombo and Califano (2022), Mailand (2022), Pokorná (2022), Peveling et al. (2022) and Tros (2022) for detailed country reports.

focus on medium-sized and large companies with more than 250 employees across all the economic sectors. In total, we obtained 380 responses for all five countries in the sample<sup>4</sup>.

All countries in the sample are characterised with the employers' density above EU27-average, except for Slovakia (50.3%), while the highest employers' density can be observed in the Netherlands and Italy (see Table 1). The collective bargaining coverage in these selected countries is also above the EU27-average, except for the remarkably low figures for Slovakia (25%). In this regard, the union density is exceptionally low in Slovakia and Germany, while in Denmark (67.5%) the density is the highest one among these countries.

*Table 1: Foundations of collective bargaining in five EU Member States (2018) (%)*

Country	Employer organisation density*	Trade union density**	Collective bargaining coverage
Denmark	68.3	67.5	82
Germany	67.9	16.6	54
Italy	78.3	32.6	100
Netherlands	85	16.5	76.7
Slovakia	50.3	11.3	25
EU27 average	54,1 <sup>5</sup>	25,4 <sup>6</sup>	53,5 <sup>7</sup>

\* Refers to employees in firms organized in employer organisations as a proportion of all employees.

\*\* Refers to the proportion of employees who are member of a trade union among all employees

Source: OECD/AIAS ICTWSS Database (<https://www.oecd.org/employment/ictwss-database.htm>).

## Vocational Education and Training and social dialogue

The VET presents a range of policies that are assumed to alleviate the worsening labour market conditions typically for young people via preparing them to acquire competences and skills for the work in specific occupations (ILO and OECD, 2014). The VET systems comprise commonly of **(1) work-based and/or school-based learning** that are carried out mainly by employers (often in cooperation with schools) and **(2) requalification and upskilling schemes** also provided by the employers or educational institutions (OECD, 2011). While the former category of measures is related to the school-to-work transition and helping young cohorts to enter and get successfully integrated in the labour market, the latter one is supposed to help the individuals (in and out of the labour market) in need of up-skilling and re-skilling to gain necessary skills that address current labour market needs (McGrath, et al, 2018; OECD, 2011).

Nevertheless, there can be seen variations in the VET schemes across the EU countries in the effectiveness in respect to labour integration, improving working conditions, the level of accessibility, and inclusiveness of the particular schemes (Rageth and Renold, 2020). What also differs is the level and character of

<sup>4</sup> The country structure of the dataset is as follows: Denmark (49 responses), Germany (116), Italy (110), Netherlands (29), Slovakia (76). As for the company size: 0-249 employees (105 responses); 250-499 (182); 500-999 (56); 1000+ (44).

<sup>5</sup> For France, Greece and Romania the numbers from 2017 were used; for Bulgaria, Lithuania and Slovenia from 2016; for Belgium, Croatia and Portugal from 2014.

<sup>6</sup> For Bulgaria, Cyprus, France, Greece, Poland and Portugal the union density numbers from 2016 were used; from Slovenia from 2015, for Hungary from 2012, Malta w/ data.

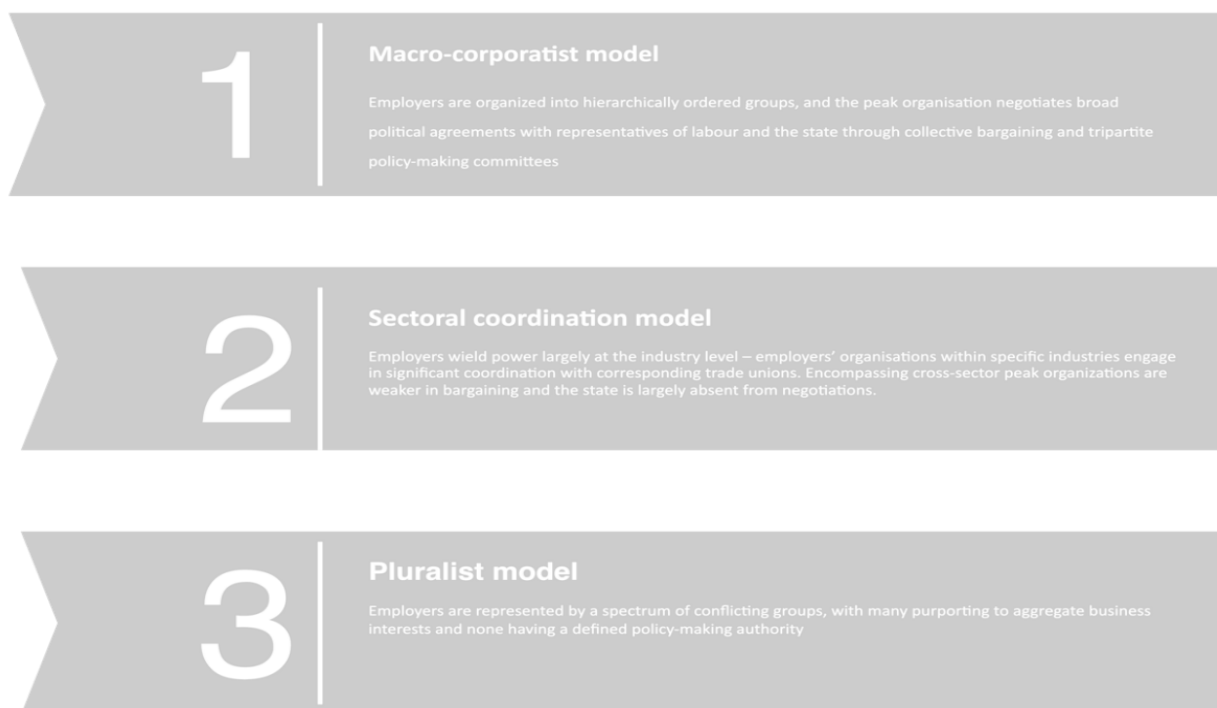
<sup>7</sup> For Finland, Greece, Ireland, Poland, Romania and Slovenia numbers from 2017 were used; for Cyprus, Malta, and Slovakia from 2016, for Poland from 2015, for Croatia from 2014.

involvement of the key stakeholders in the policy formulation, adoption and implementation of the VET policies. It appears that **the success of VET policies strongly depends on the quality of interactions**

**between the stakeholders in the labour market and school systems that play critical roles in the addressing coherence of skill supply and demand** (Bolli et al., 2018).

Regarding this, employers tend to engage in the policy-making in various ways, including by unilateral and collective actions that helps to establish bargaining power. While the former one presents individual-based actions such as lobbying or commenting on the legislative proposals, the latter occurs via employers' organisations, which facilitates greater bargaining power vis-à-vis other policy actors. In this respect, Martin and Swank (2008, 2013) presented a typology of employers based on their involvement in policy making. The typology distinguishes between organisations according to their position in policy making. This position in turn closely relates to interaction with other players. Each model's strength depends also on how many organisations join an employers' organisations (see Figure 1).

*Figure 1: Typology of employer involvement in policy making*



*Source: Martin and Swank (2008, 2013).*

Based on the above typology, Table 2 summarises the findings from five country studies, showing diversity between a macro-corporatist model, a sectoral coordination models and a pluralist model of employers' policy influence. In the latter, tripartite dialogue lacks real impact on policy making and is supplemented by other, more direct, forms of influence, often based on political bargaining and trade-offs.

Table 2: Employer organisations' involvement in VET policies at the national level

Country	Model of employers' policy influence	Employers' involvement in VET policies
<b>Denmark</b>	Macro-corporatist model with strong elements of the sectoral coordination model	As for the VET system, the EOs are involved via <b>(1) inter-sectoral tri-partite council advising the minister, (2) sector-based tripartite bodies called "Further Training Councils", (3) bipartite and tripartite boards at the school-level, and (4) collective bargaining that plays a role where the sector-based further training funds and the individual annual right to further training are agreed upon.</b>
<b>Germany</b>	Sectoral coordination model	<b>Collective agreements mainly on the sectoral level</b> and trilateral Alliance on Vocational Education (since 2014).
<b>Italy</b>	Sectoral coordination model	<b>Sectoral bipartite collective bargaining that includes sector-level bodies.</b> In case of VET policies, social partners are only audited a sort of formal mechanism which implies limited involvement in policy making.
<b>Netherlands</b>	Macro corporatist model with high sectoral coordination	<b>Social dialogue and negotiations within Socio-Economic Council (tripartite) and Labour Foundation (bipartite) at the national level (with impact on governmental policies),</b> together with stable collective bargaining at mostly sectoral level. As for the VET, <b>the sectoral chambers</b> serve to facilitate the dialogue between the EOs at the sectoral level and provide policy proposals directly to the government.
<b>Slovakia</b>	Façade corporatism	<b>Formal tripartite consultations and commenting on the proposed legislation, serving as an advisory board</b> without binding impact on legislation. Real impact occurs through decentralized lobbying and political bargaining. The four-partite national, sectoral, and regional councils for VET play a key role for policy-making and implementation of the VET measures.

Source: Authors' interpretation based on Martin and Swank (2008, 2013) and national findings summarised in the BAWEU national reports.

### Employers' policy priorities and strategies in VET policies

The VET schemes that appear to be the most relevant among policy priorities in the social dialogue in five studied countries (Denmark, Germany, Italy, Netherlands, and Slovakia) are **(1) the school-to-work transition policies and (2) continuous education at the workplace (upskilling and re-qualification schemes)**. The former presents primarily traineeships and apprenticeships provided by employers typically in the cooperation with schools and with financial incentives delivered by the state or municipality. The continuous education is in the context of this research associated primarily with continuous (formal or

informal) vocational education at the workplace while its aim is to address changing labour market skill needs driven by the digitalisation, automation, and green transition.

The employers' organisations across the studied countries put emphasis on different priorities regarding the VET policies in each country. **In Germany**, the recent priority has been given on facilitating and extending apprenticeships which present a core policy of German VET system. **The German VET system is based on a voluntary involvement of employers that are incentivised to offer a number of training slots for potential trainees.** Recently, one of the main goals is to increase the number of apprenticeship and internship placements in the German economy. In this respect, **since 2014, the federal-level Trilateral Alliance for Vocational Education has been in charge of increasing the number of apprenticeships in cooperation with the Federal Employment Agency under which the apprenticeships slots are registered. The apprenticeships and internships should particularly aim at helping vulnerable groups** such as school leavers and unskilled, unemployed, foreign workers, and refugees.

Increasing the public investments in the VET policies is generally strongly supported by the interest associations and other business groups in Germany. Nevertheless, there could be seen a dispute about a degree of the state intervention and autonomy of VET providers, when especially EOs demand more independent and privileged status of firm-based apprenticeship training. **At the same time, there can be observed joint efforts of both the trade unions and EOs to improve conditions for providing the high-quality work-based training and life-long learning and to respond to changing labour market needs effectively.** In this regard, the German EOs aspire to standardize school education curriculum at the state level to increase the comparability of degrees.

**In the Netherlands, the employers' representatives for the most part emphasize the importance of the school-to-work transition policies and continuous training specifically of the older workers which supposes to respond to the recent labour shortages in the Dutch economy.** Nevertheless, the research showed a lack of actions in the collective bargaining relating to promoting continuous training or linking the education to the labour market in general. Additionally, the Dutch EOs' priorities of the public investments lay in facilitating digital skills, flexible and demand-driven education system, intense cooperation between the schools and the business sector, life-long learning in terms of cross-sectoral job-to-job training and re-education.

**The Danish EOs put a strong emphasis on the initial vocational education (including apprenticeship and dual education) and further (continuous) training.** The Danish major EOs aspire to promote measures that are linked to specific needs of their members and sectors. For instance, the EOs representing small and medium-sized companies tend to focus more on the self-employed in the education system or EOs gathering members in the IT-sector prioritise promoting IT skills at the primary and secondary level of education. The Danish EOs currently identify several problems regarding the VET, mainly **a remaining shortage of practical training places, a lack of students in particular occupations (such as electricians, carpenters, workers in the hospitality system), and the difficulties with obtaining sufficient use of the funds for further education and training especially among the low-qualified workers.**

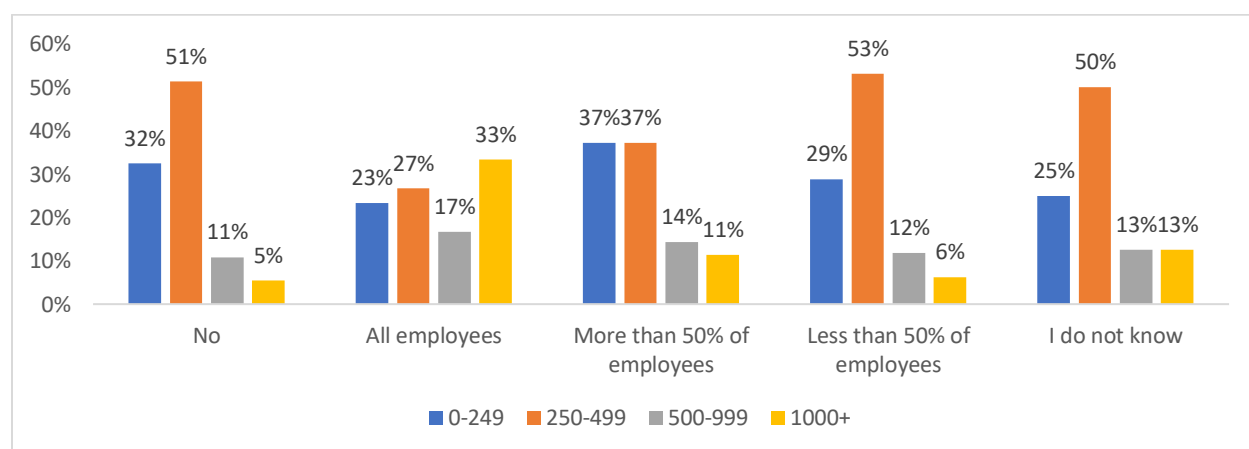
**In Italy**, the VET policies are being an integral part of the agenda of the Italian EOs mainly in terms of improving the technical (so-called *professional*) school system. Long-term attempts to introduce a vocational track have been fragmented and did not bring substantive policy changes. **The major Italian EOs stress the need to strengthen the school-to-work transition system, reiterate more active role of the companies in designing the school programmes, and promote increasing publicly funded incentives (including tax credits) for the companies as providers of VET at the workplace.** In respect

to the work-based trainings, the main EOs *Confindustria* argues that training should not be linked to national collective contracts, and each firm should be able to negotiate the conditions with the people involved.

**In the spotlight of the social dialogue over VET policies in Slovakia is the general issue of adaptation of skills to digitalisation and green transition, and also as a response to the shortage of skilled workers.** One of the core policies of Slovak VET system is the Dual system of VET which was established in 2015 by adopting the Act on Vocational Education and Training that reinforced the role of employers in adjusting the school curriculum and organising the trainings. The main aim of the dual system was to enhance students' practical skills and create a framework for the apprenticeship based on the close cooperation between the school and employers. The current key issues for the employers present the insufficient funding on the side of employers for implementing VET policies, administrative burdens associated with the delivery of the teaching programmes, and increasing employability of early school leavers. Currently, the Slovak leading EOs promote changes in the financing system of the secondary schools (participating in the vocational education), revising the study programmes and career counselling.

As can be seen in Figure 2, the BAWEU survey findings showed that employers that provide on-the-job and continuous training to all employees are mainly large companies (1000+ employees) (33%) followed by companies with 250-499 companies (27%) and companies with less than 250 employees (23%). Continuous training at the workplace is provided to more than a half of the workforce mainly in the companies with less than 500 employees (74% in total for both types of companies). On the other hand, the smaller companies with less than 500 employees are more likely to provide no continuous training at all (83% in total per both size types of companies) or provide it only for less than 50% of their workforce.

*Figure 2: Proportion of employees benefiting from on-the-job or continuous training by company size (N= 287)*

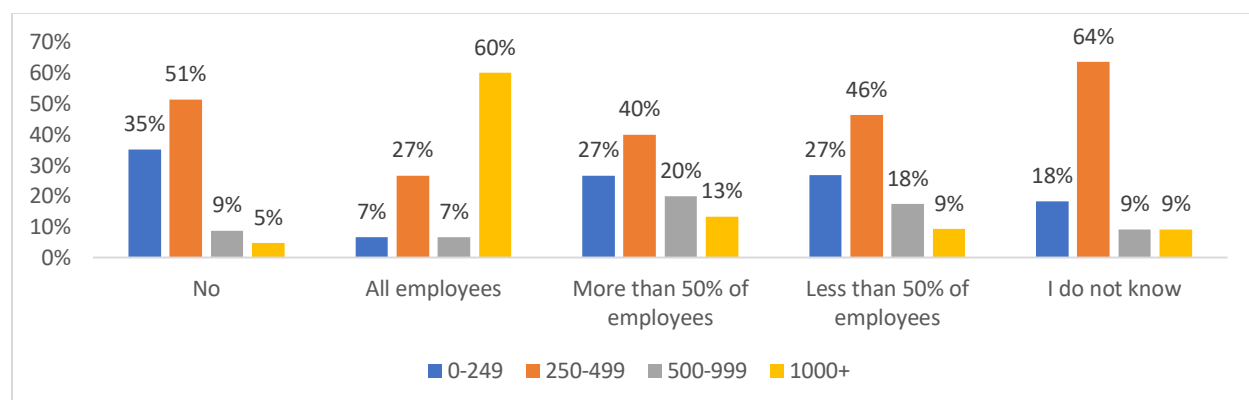


*Source: BAWEU employers' survey 2021-2022. Question: Does your company provide to employees one or more of the following benefits? (One of the benefits presented on-the-job and continuous training)*

Requalification or life-long learning schemes are more likely to be provided to all or most of employees in large companies and in companies with 250-499 employees (Figure 3). On the contrary, of those companies that do not provide these learning schemes at all are mainly companies with less than 500 employees (86%). The same applies for the group of companies that provide the learning schemes to less than a half of their workforce when 27% of them present companies with less than 250 employees and 46% of them are companies with 250-499 employees.



Figure 3: Proportion of employees benefitting from requalification scheme or life-long learning scheme by company size (N= 287)



Source: BAWEU employers' survey 2021-2022. Question: Does your company provide to employees one or more of the following benefits? (One of the benefits presented requalification and life-long learning scheme)

### Interaction and coordination of policy priorities between employers' organisations and other stakeholders

The policy discussions between the social partners over the VET policies take place typically within the traditional tripartite or bipartite bodies. Besides that, in most of the studied countries, the specific institutional bodies have emerged to facilitate the discussion between relevant stakeholders in the VET system. **In Germany, the Alliance for Initial and Continuing Education and Training was established in 2015. The new Alliance was signed in 2019 between the German Government and other social partners.** The Alliance consists not merely of the EOs and trade unions, but also other relevant stakeholders such as various governmental bodies at the state or federal levels, non-governmental bodies, or expert commissions. The recent goal of the Alliance is to increase the number of dual vocational training places, facilitate the sectoral dialogue to promote initial dual vocational training, and implement new approaches to promote the taking up of VET training by disadvantaged youth (including refugees) by providing further assistance. Thus, the Alliance serves to provide with the platform for discussion but also for policy-making and drafting legislation in a coordinated way.

**In the Netherlands, collective agreements play a pivotal role in providing further specifications about the VET regulations,** which relate mainly to the financial compensation of students placed in the companies. Nevertheless, the research showed that VET policies are usually discussed merely within employers' networks and within bilateral dialogue between business companies and schools with a limited involvement of the trade unions. The EOs are generally active in lobbying for improving infrastructure needed for implementation of VET and for facilitating consecutive learning pathways at regional levels for technical and vocational training at the lower secondary education. In this respect, **the Dutch EOs typically cooperate on the sectoral level (within sectoral chambers) and propose policy recommendations to the national government regarding adaptations in education and training programs of intermediate vocational education schools.** Also, they currently demand to preserve the subsidies for work-placements, teaching practices and internships within the companies. Additionally, public investments in lifelong learning in the context of *sustainable employability* present an important topic in collective bargaining between EOs and trade unions in the Netherlands. Although the Dutch trade unions support cooperation



between schools and social partners via sectoral chambers mainly in regards to placements and decent payments for the trainees, the research showed that the issue does not appear to be a priority for the unions.

The Danish system of VET is characterised by a strong role of social partners; **they engage in policy making by participating in (1) inter-sectoral tri-partite council advising the minister, (2) sector-based tripartite bodies called “Further Training Councils”, (3) the Boards of the individual schools and training centers, and 4) collective bargaining, which plays a role where the sector-based further training funds and the individual annual right to further training are agreed upon.** Even though the competences to design the courses have remained at the sectoral level, since late 1980s as a result of the decentralization, the tripartite boards at the schools have been granted more responsibilities regarding the budget and supply of learning courses. The latest major VET reform occurred in Denmark in 2016 and aimed at increasing the quality of the VET system by focusing on expanding the number of practical training places for the vocational dual system, and introducing a system of economic incentives for the companies engaging in VET. Both the trade unions and EOs were interested mainly in increasing the placements in the dual system, which is a subject to tripartite negotiations. The core of the negotiations were financial incentives to create these placements which contributed to the diverging interests within EOs regarding the economic burden on the companies and, as a result, the consensus was hard to reach on the employers’ side. On the other hand, the trade unions aspired to focus mainly on the low-skilled workers which does not appear to be a strong part of the EOs' agenda.

**In Italy, the multinational companies appear to be exceptionally interested in the VET policies with a strong focus on individualized approach to the trainees.** It also appears that some of the multinational companies operating in Italy built or aspire to build their own VET infrastructure (which includes own network of collaboration and the learning curricula adjusted to the needs of the company) with a limited involvement of the trade unions or state; unless the involvement is required for providing the public funds for the company. Besides that, **the trends show that the EOs and the unions regulate specificities relating to the VET policies in the sectoral collective agreements; such bilateral bodies were established in 2003.**

In Slovakia, even though the Ministry of Education plays a key role in formulating priorities for the development and implementation of the VET policies, **the large business companies, EOs, and foreign chambers of commerce have a strong position and competences in the policy design and implementation** (including designing the course curricula, participating in the award of vocational education or assisting in training the company trainers) (Fazekas and Kureková, 2016). Additionally, decision-making and implementation of the VET policies is based on the system of councils at the national sectoral and regional level, where the policy proposals are being negotiated based on the four-partite cooperation between the Ministry of Education, EOs, trade unions, and self-governing regions.

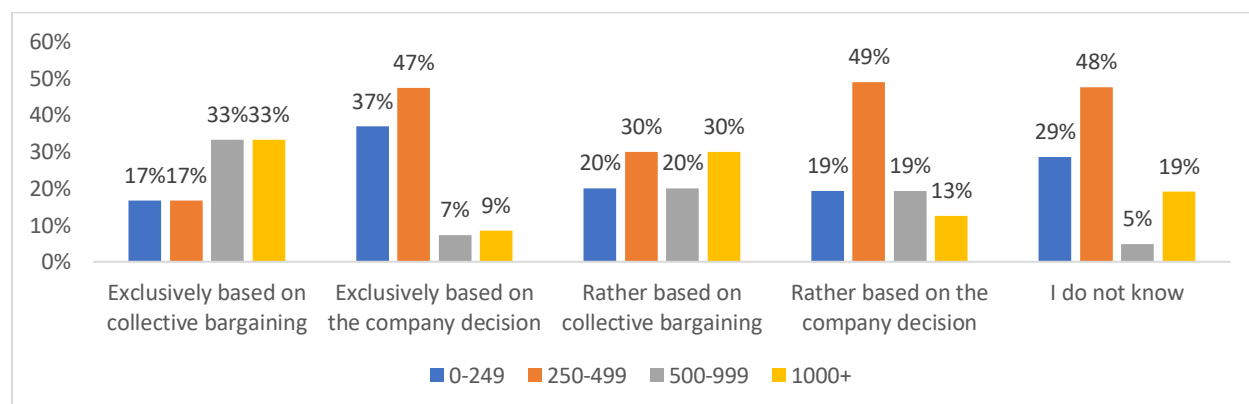
The BAWEU survey findings show that more than one third of those companies that declared that they are involved in **discussions over VET policies with the employers’ organisations** to moderate and great extent are companies with 250-499 employees (34%), followed by 28% of large companies (1000+) and 24% of companies with 500-999 employees (compared to 14% of small companies). On the other hand, almost a half of the medium-sized companies with 250-499 employees declared to be involved in discussions with the EOs only to small extent or not at all (compared to 14% of large companies with over 1000 employees).

Regarding **the involvement of the companies in consultations with the national governments**, 33% of the companies with 250-499 employees are involved to great and moderate extent compared to 26% of the large companies (1000+), and 22% of the companies with 250-499 employees. On the other hand, 32% of the small companies (<250 employees) declared that they are engaged in discussions with the government to small extent or not at all compared to the 38% of the companies with 250-499 employees and 8% of the large companies.

**The engagement of the companies in consultations with the legislators** are similar to the level of interaction with the governmental bodies; while medium-sized and large companies are involved in discussion with the legislative bodies to great or moderate extent (71% in total for companies with over 250 employees), the small companies (<250) stated that they experienced the engagement to small extent or not at all (31%).

Concerning the character of decision-making over on-the-job and continuous training from the perspective of the employers in the five studied countries, the survey findings showed that large companies (1000+ employees) are more likely to make their decisions *exclusively* or *rather* based on the collective bargaining (33% and 30% respectively) (Figure 4). On the other hand, companies with 250-499 employees tend to make decisions *exclusively* or *rather* based at company's discretion (47% and 49% respectively). The results for small companies (>250) are rather mixed; nevertheless, they are more represented among the cohorts of companies that make decision *exclusively* or *rather* based on the company discretion.

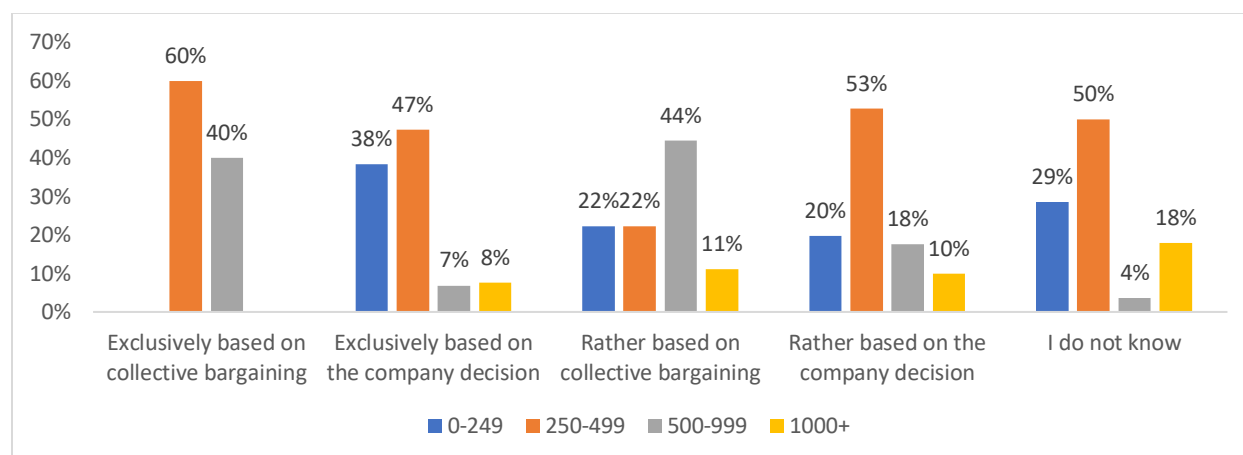
Figure 4: How the on-the job and continuous training have been decided by the company size (N=293)



Source: BAWEU employers' survey 2021-2022. Question: How was each policy listed below decided?

Regarding another type of VET, requalification and life-long learning schemes (Figure 5), 60% of those companies that make decision *exclusively* on collective bargaining are companies with 250-499 employees, followed by companies with 500-999 employees (40%). On the contrary, among those companies that make decisions without involvement of social partners at all are companies with less than 500 employees (85% in total). Companies that make their decisions *rather* based on their own discretion are companies with 250-499 employees (53%).

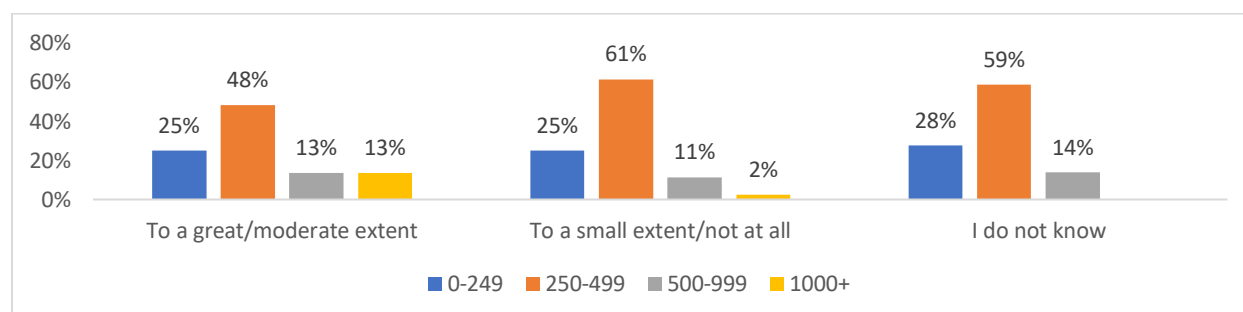
*Figure 5: How the requalification scheme or life-long learning scheme have been decided by the company size (N=293)*



*Source: BAWEU employers' survey 2021-2022. Question: How was each policy listed below decided?*

As can be seen in Figure 6, those companies that declared that their VET policies are impacted to great or moderate extent by the multinationals' headquarters are mainly companies with 250-499 employees (48%) followed by small companies (>250) with 25% compared to 13% of companies with over 500 and 1000 employees. Those companies that declared that their VET policies are shaped by the multinationals' headquarters are rather companies with 250-499 employees followed by small companies (<250 employees).

*Figure 6: How much multinationals' headquarters influence the company's VET policy by the company size (N= 125)*



*Source: BAWEU employers' survey 2021-2022. Question: If your company is a multinational (otherwise, skip the question), please evaluate to what extent the company headquarters/parent company influences the company policies in four policy areas.*

## Conclusions

The research showed that the policy dialogue over the VET schemes in the five studied countries is shaped by both the global and country-specific labour market trends, most of all digitalisation, automation, green transition, shortages of skilled workers in specific professions or sectors, and the intensifying needs to foster effective and sustainable labour integration of youth, and other vulnerable groups.

**The VET schemes that have become an integral part in the recent social and policy dialogues embrace primarily school-based or work-based measures facilitating (1) school-to-work transition and (2) continuous vocational education and re-training at the workplace.** As for the former category, the employers' policy priorities present mostly fostering and extending apprenticeships or other forms of on-the-job-training, improving the system of financial incentives for VET providers, and increasing the level of employers' autonomy in policy design and implementation of school-to-work transition measures. In regard to the former category, the employers put emphasis on the needs to adapt skills to the digitalisation and facilitate the skills of the groups of workers that might be more vulnerable in the digitalised era.

**The effectiveness of the VET schemes is strongly influenced by the character and quality of interactions between the key policy stakeholders.** The employers' organisations engage in policy-making or policy dialogue over the VET policies using multiple ways, including traditional tri-partite or bipartite settings at different levels but also via expert committees or other institutes that have been established with the specific aim to foster the effectiveness and quality of VET system. These specialized institutions provide platforms for discussions and decision-making not only between the traditional social partners but also other key stakeholders in the VET system such as the school-level stakeholders, experts, or regional governments.

#### **Recommendations for EU-level employers' organisations**

- **Facilitate exchange of information, good practices, and expand the knowledge of employers' organisations in the EU Member States about priorities in the VET policies and explore opportunities to coordinate these priorities across the EU Member States.** The focus should be given especially in regard to the training and labour integration of youth and vulnerable groups that may encounter specific barriers to the VET schemes.
- **Carry out regular reviews and surveys of employers' priorities on the VET policies and examine what problems they identify in the policy design and implementation.** At the same time, explore the methods of national policy influence across all the EU Member States, and ways of articulating the national employers' interests to the EU-level of policy making. Use the outcomes of these surveys to develop an EU-level and EU-wide employers' preferences regarding the position of different models of the VET, and support EU-level regulations in this regard.
- **In the context of frequently opposite approaches to the VET policies by employers and trade unions, cooperate with trade unions at the national and EU levels and seek consensus for a joint preference of a certain type of VET policy** and consider articulating this joint interest to EU-level policy makers with the outlook of declaring EU-wide values and EU-level VET regulation.

- **Provide trainings for member organisations of EU-level employers’ organisations to align national and EU-level priorities of employers in VET and thereby to increase their bargaining power in policy impact.** This knowledge may be then forwarded to the member organisations by formulating sector-specific or occupation-specific guidelines on VET policies. This process can facilitate a stronger role of social dialogue and would improve implementation of the existing legislation and transposing the EU legislation as well.
- **Consider EU-level priorities based on the diverse inputs on Member States’ evidence on the employer preferences and the modes of their policy influence.** Acknowledge diverse policy interests not only across the Member States, but also across sectors and companies of different sizes as well as the specific positions of multinationals (operating simultaneously in various policy frameworks).
- **Facilitate peer review sessions for national employers’ federations from peers in other EU Member States to develop feasible occupational or company-specific VET policies and articulate their interests vis-à-vis national legislative bodies, trade unions, and other stakeholders.**

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