

## European Steel Skills Agenda (ESSA)



### What's New?

#### Steel Industry Skills Framework

The fieldwork conducted in the 5 European countries (DE, ES, IT, PL, UK) within WP4 - VET Requirements and Regulations / National VET Systems - was concluded in early 2021. The data collected have been used to inform the second iteration of the WP4 deliverables, which have been published on the ESSA website at the end of August 2021 (see links below).

The interviews with industry experts have highlighted the following challenges that the steel is currently facing:

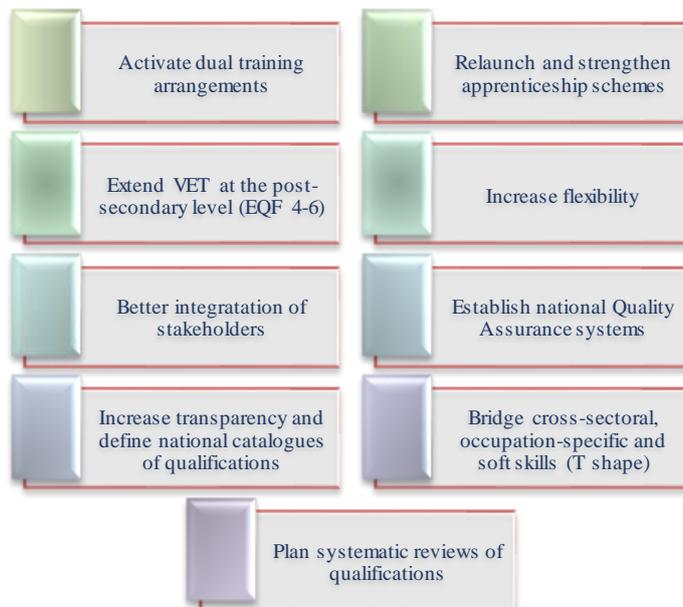


The cross-country fieldwork has helped identify a list of common skills needs (which green skills cut across), which offer an illustration of what vocational education and training systems need to deliver in order to better support the industry.



Technological development is producing more complex and integrated workplaces. The need for a more solid process and system knowledge was one of the most common remarks coming from the experts interviewed. Furthermore, an urgent need has been stressed to overcome the parceling out of competencies and to embrace a more holistic approach to occupational training. The need for a holistic approach is consistent with the main findings of the fieldwork, particularly in relation to the need for transversal skills to a much higher extent. It is becoming increasingly important that these skills are integrated into a T-shaped structure and supplement the technical competencies in vocational curricula. While some VET systems are already paying more attention to transversal skills, the extent to which these are incorporated in the vocational programmes varies.

### Most common VET reforms identified by ESSA



Some convergence has been observed in VET reforms across the EU over the last two decades. The most common reforms have consisted of strengthening the ties between VET and the labour market, relaunching apprenticeships to anchor training to actual jobs, broadening courses contents to equip learners with more transversal skills, and extending and strengthening VET provision at post-secondary and tertiary level.

Other WP4 findings can be summarized as follows:

- ❖ There is some degree of tension between fast responses and mid- to long-term incremental adaptation in the case study countries. This can be exemplified by the cases of the United Kingdom and Germany. While fast responses e.g. in the UK might lack coherence and do not point to a long-term strategy, the too rigid vocational paths e.g. in Germany have shortcomings in meeting the flexibility required by labour markets.
- ❖ In liberal market contexts, such as the United Kingdom, employers increasing involvement in updating and designing new qualifications might lead to a proliferation of narrow-defined occupational standards. This, in turn, might undermine the capacity of the system to deliver what ESCO defines as “skills with higher degree of reusability”, so limiting workers as well as businesses’ resilience.
- ❖ Where a VET system is more fragmented e.g. the UK, policy structures are both more complex and unstable. This can inhibit employers’ and learners’ engagement and trust.
- ❖ Completing IVET and obtaining a vocational qualification can no longer be considered the final goal, rather the first step in a lifelong commitment to learning. In this respect, IVET acquires the status of foundational training, on which specialized and up-to-date competencies are built.

Based on its findings, WP4 has addressed several recommendations to the steel industry. The sector should:

- Lobby at the regional level
- Focus on sectoral specialisation through CVET
- Engage with schools to promote dual training and placements
- Engage with national programmes for mapping occupations and skills foresight
- Engage with ECVET mobility
- Consider the opportunities and limits of modular provision
- Encourage workers to make use of schemes for validation of prior learning
- Align internal provision with national/international frameworks
- Make use of EQAVET framework for monitoring quality of provision
- Nourish an innovation culture at all levels
- Integrate with online training platforms
- Adopt sectoral tools to compare national qualifications

## Sector Skills Matrix

The Sector Skills Matrix that is being developed as a product of WP4 intends to offer industry stakeholders a tool for capturing and comparing information about steel-relevant qualifications and relative transversal skills provision across different countries (starting with the ESSA five case study countries).

The matrix is designed to capture information such as:

- ❖ The most relevant steel-production IVET and CVET programmes related to Maintenance, Melt Shop, Rolling Mills, Logistics and Quality Control in each of the five case study countries.
- ❖ Generalised job/occupational profile description related to each qualification.
- ❖ Learning Outcomes concerning transversal skills.
- ❖ Information related to national VET systems: national labels, classification codes, links to curricula and regulations (where available).
- ❖ Assessment/Evaluation of current transversal skills provisions and future proofness of transversal skills provision (in close cooperation with representatives of steel companies in the case study countries).

At the European level, the matrix can inform steel-sector focused strategic decision-making related to policies, research programmes and development or adjustment of European VET tools. EU-level industry bodies and trade unions can use the information provided by the matrix in similar ways or to inform campaigning or lobbying efforts.

Industry bodies and trade unions operating at the national level could use the Matrix to try to influence the direction of national VET systems or to develop additional training programmes in response to identified skills gaps. The Matrix can also serve as useful feedback mechanisms to national VET institutions, and to training providers as the identified skills gaps offer opportunities for more tailored training offers.

**ESSA Website:** [www.estep.eu/essa](http://www.estep.eu/essa)

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