

SURVEY FINDINGS FROM THE VET2SUSTAIN PROJECT

The VET2sustain project focuses on making vocational education and training (VET) more attractive in Europe. The research produced by the project shows the current situation in VET schools. It tells us about their challenges, experiences and visions how VET should be developed in the future.



Figure 1 Countries responding.

The online study

The project carried out a survey in European vocational schools. The survey was conducted as an online survey from 28.5.2024 to 1.8.2024. It received 160 responses from 18 countries. The largest number of respondents came from countries participating in the

VET2sustain project, but 17% of responses were from other European countries.

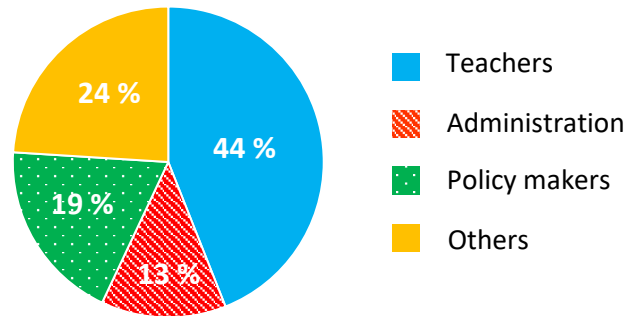


Figure 2 Profile of school staff respondents.

Responses were received from teachers, administration, policy makers and others (coordinators, education experts, principals, etc.).

Age distribution of students

The largest age group of students in the responding VET institutions was 15-19 years old. The second largest group was 20-24 year olds. The next age groups were much smaller.

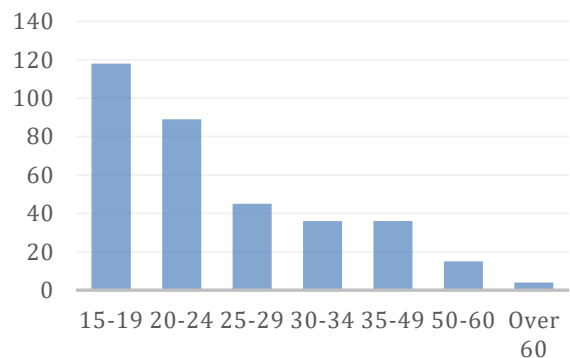


Figure 3 Age distribution of students in responding schools.

Views on VET in their own country

In general, respondents agreed that general education and higher education are considered more valuable than vocational education in their country. There was also a common view that societal attitudes have a significant impact on the attractiveness of VET. Despite this, vocational education and training was seen as practical and the quality of training and teaching was generally considered to be good. However, perceptions of VET vary across countries, reflecting different cultural and social values.

Perspectives on their own school

- Finland seemed to have the strongest overall VET situation, especially in teaching resources and student-company integration.
- Italy follows closely, showing slightly stronger alignment with the labour market and a good number of student applicants.
- Germany stands out as having significant issues with student recruitment, work placements, and the quality of resources.
- The Netherlands presents a balanced but slightly below-average situation in student recruitment while maintaining reasonable satisfaction in other areas.

Identified challenges in VET

According to the survey, the main challenges faced by vocational schools are the rapidly changing skills requirements of working life and cooperation with businesses. Lack of resources and technological developments in the fields of digitalisation and sustainable development also present challenges for schools. Motivating students and keeping them focused on their studies, as well as providing flexible teaching for different age groups, bring their own challenges to education design. (Figure 4 on page 3.)

How vocational schools have responded to challenges

Institutions had already made efforts to respond to these challenges. Below is a prioritized list of the measures taken, starting with the most frequently mentioned.

- Aligning with Labor Market Needs and adjusting education to a rapidly changing working life.
- Motivating and supporting students.
- Modernising the learning environment (technology, equipment, environment).
- Developing teachers' skills and pedagogy.
- Partnership and collaboration with working life.
- Diversity and special needs, offer flexible ways to study.
- Securing resources.
- Increasing knowledge about VET.
- Supporting at-risk students.

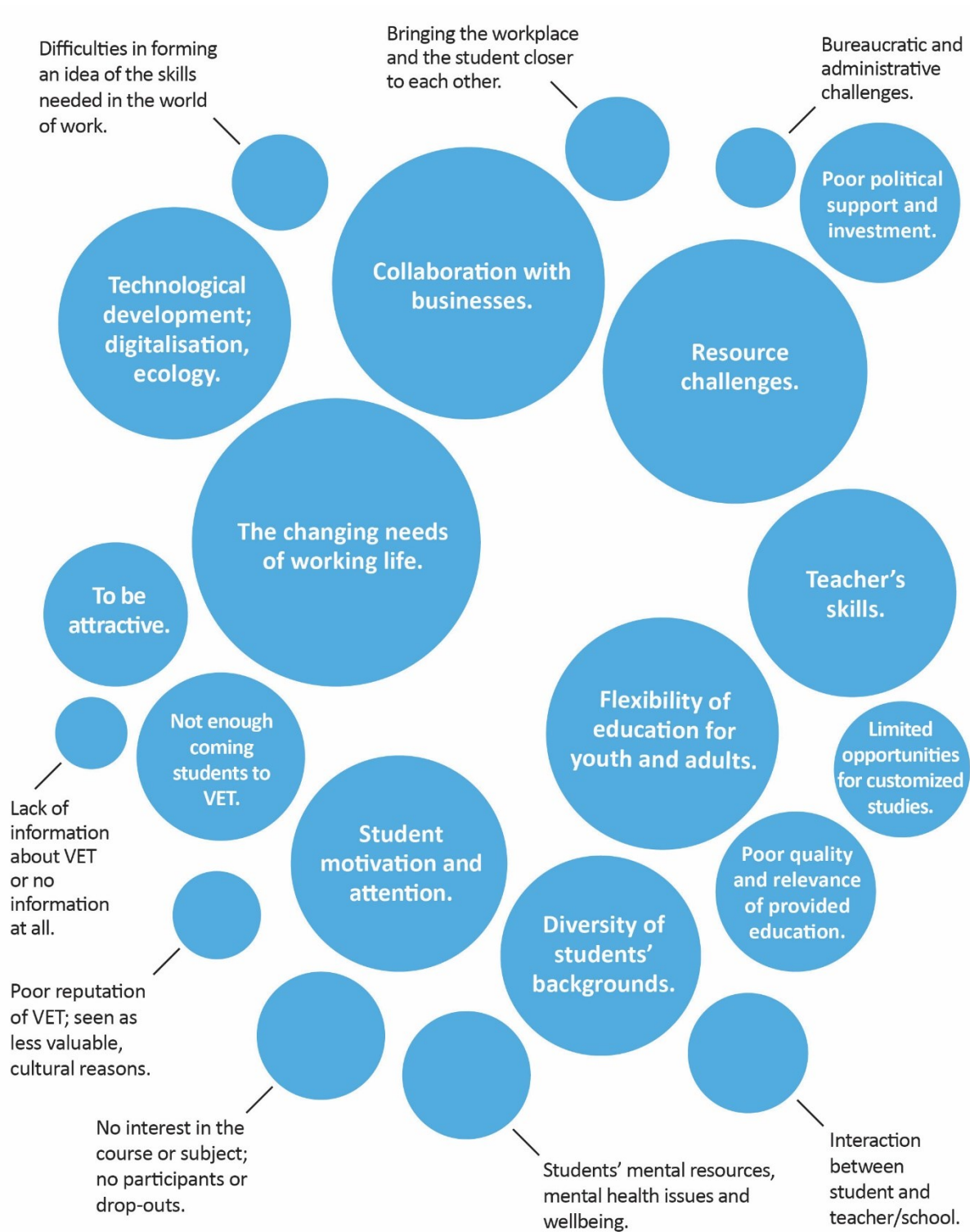


Figure 4 The issues that respondents had mentioned as the biggest challenges for VET. The bigger the circle, the more often the challenge was mentioned in the responses.

Current media usage

Institutions primarily use school websites and social media to promote VET programs. Word of mouth is also important, especially in Italy. In Germany social media was not as popular as in other countries, although it was a split second with word of mouth. Traditional media and email newsletters were used less frequently.

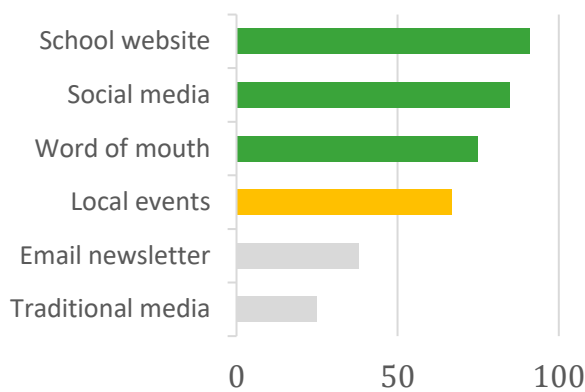


Figure 5 The most used public communication channels.

Media usage and school attractiveness

Schools with enough applicants use more social media, use their own websites actively and also spread the word through word of mouth. Attractive schools use multiple channels of communication, and most school staff are aware of communication. The assumption is that communication is better organized and thought through in attractive schools. Active use of different communication tools, especially social media, seemed to correlate with the number of people coming to the institution.

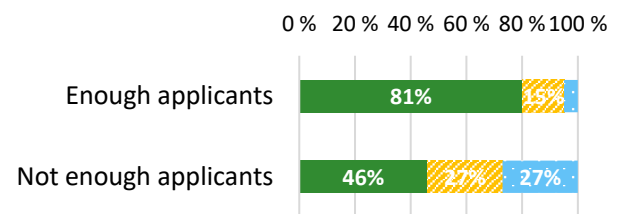
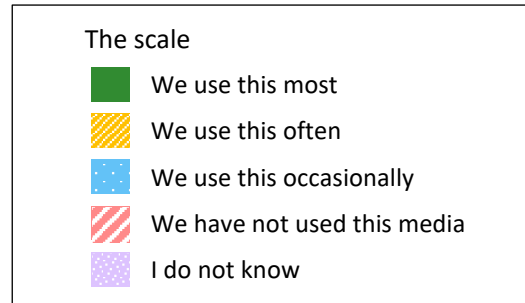


Figure 6 Social media usage.

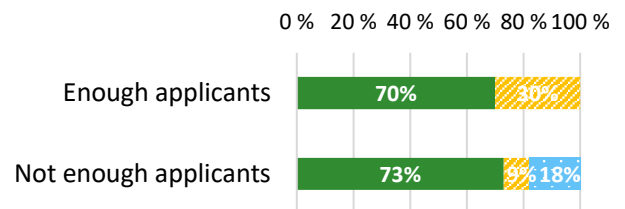


Figure 7 Use of the school website.

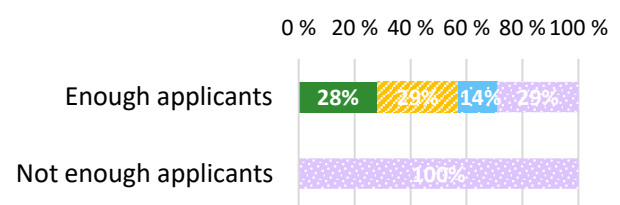


Figure 8 Use of other communication.

Best ways to promote VET

Social media campaigns were generally considered in all countries to be the most effective way of promoting VET in their own area. In the top 3 also were “Collaboration with local businesses” and “Community events and job affairs”. Exceptions did occur. Biggest exception: in Italy posters and leaflets are the third most popular method.

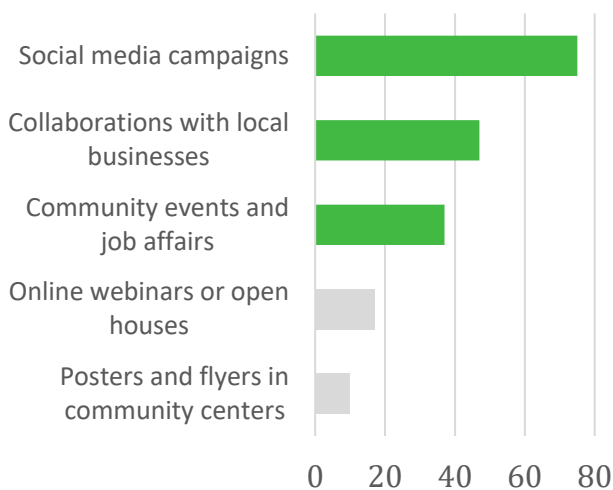


Figure 9 Opinion on the most effective ways to advertise VET.

Showcasing VET expertise

The best ways to bring the expertise of VET professionals to the public were considered to be:

- Success stories and testimonials
- Live demonstrations
- Online videos showcasing skills and teaching

The main exception to this was in Greece, where the third most popular method was articles in the local media.

The best way to positively influence the attractiveness of VET

In the open questions, the main suggestions for improving the attractiveness of VET were to strengthen:

- Visibility and benefits of education.
- Social status and value of VET.
- Cooperation with businesses and working life.
- Modernisation of teaching and curriculum.

The various ready-made suggestions given to influence the attractiveness of VET were all widely supported. More than 70% of all respondents agreed or partly agreed with the statements. (The ready-made suggestions were: Effective information campaigns about the benefits of VET, increasing the social value of practical professions, highlighting career opportunities, enhancing cooperation between VET and labour markets, Introducing new technologies and teaching methods, Increasing international cooperation and student exchanges.)

The biggest difference was Germany's support for new technologies and teaching methods, and for increasing international cooperation and student exchanges. Their support for these was well below average.

Open messages to the survey

The following insights were gathered from the open-ended question in the survey, highlighting key suggestions and concerns for improving VET.

