



## Report: Deliverable 4.2 Report on best practices

# VET2Sustain – Promoting sustainable, inclusive and digital Vocational Education and Training

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## 1. Report Summary

This report presents the outcomes of Task 4.2 within Work Package 4 of the VET2Sustain project. The objective of Deliverable 4.2 is to identify, analyze and compare policy measures, initiatives and best practices implemented by national and regional VET governing and qualification-awarding bodies across the participating countries.

The insights were received from structured interviews with ministries, national agencies, chambers, regional authorities, labour-market institutions and VET provider associations in Finland, the Netherlands and Germany. The report responds directly to the requirements outlined in the project's workplan and contributes to the overarching purpose of WP4: to strengthen the strategic foundations of VET attractiveness through inclusive, digital, international and sustainable approaches.

The findings reveal a high degree of commitment among the interviewed authorities to maintaining high-quality VET systems, despite increasing demographic, financial and operational pressures. The interviews also highlight a range of promising practices. Examples include Finland's competence-based reform and equal-access legislation; the Netherlands' nationally coordinated Stagepact and its 'BBL Offensive', a national effort to expand participation in dual VET pathways that combine school learning with paid work; and Germany's targeted support structures such as the Training Manager project and primAQ, a quality-improvement programme that helps companies strengthen their training capacity and meet apprenticeship standards.

This deliverable complements the student-led perspectives gathered in Deliverable 4.1 by providing a systemic view from national and regional authorities. Together, D4.1 and D4.2 form a comprehensive evidence base to support the strategic recommendations to be developed later within WP4 and the project's long-term action planning.

## 2. introduction

Deliverable 4.2 belongs to Work Package 4, which focuses on dialogue and stakeholder engagement across multiple layers of VET systems. Within this WP, Task 4.2 required partners to organise structured conversations with national governing and qualification-awarding bodies to gather authoritative insights into governance structures, policy orientations, best practices and anticipated challenges. The interviews were guided by a common methodological framework and reporting format, ensuring consistency and comparability across countries.

The VET2Sustain project aims to enhance the attractiveness of vocational education by integrating digitalisation, the green transition, inclusion and internationalisation as core components in European VET cooperation. The project also builds on the findings of its WP2 evidence review, which identified several

elements that strengthen VET attractiveness, including clear learning pathways, strong connections with working life, supportive guidance structures and opportunities for practical, work-based learning. Within the project we refer to these elements as success factors. To achieve this, WP4 provides the necessary evidence base through the combination of student perspectives (D4.1) and system-level insights (D4.2). While Deliverable 4.1 presented recommendations developed by VET students during an international workshop, Deliverable 4.2 focuses on the perspectives of policy-level stakeholders, completing the multi-actor foundation required for evidence-based recommendations.

The interviews analysed here were conducted in Finland, the Netherlands and Germany between 2024 and 2025 and reflect the experiences and viewpoints of key institutions involved in steering, regulating, supporting or shaping VET systems in these countries.

### 3. Methodology

#### 3.1 Purpose and Scope

Task 4.2 of the VET2Sustain project involves conducting structured dialogues with national governing and qualification-awarding bodies in all partner countries. The purpose is to generate comparable evidence on VET governance, policy orientations, best practices, and systemic challenges, consistent with the objectives of WP4.

The data collected through these interviews supports the preparation of Deliverable 4.2: Report on Best Practices and contributes to a broader understanding of how national systems can strengthen the attractiveness and sustainability of vocational education and training.

#### 3.2 Research Design

The methodological approach follows a qualitative, multi-country, and comparative design. Semi-structured interviews were used to obtain policy-level insights while maintaining flexibility for context-specific elaboration. The design emphasises:

- Policy relevance, engaging actors with strategic responsibilities in VET governance.
- Comparability achieved through common interview tools and reporting formats.
- Depth of insight, through qualitative inquiry targeting priorities, innovations, and system challenges.

This approach supports cross-country learning and enables the identification of transferable best practices.

### 3.3 Stakeholder Selection

All partners identified interviewees using the guidance [Example of stakeholders and interviewees](#)

Stakeholders include: Ministries and national VET authorities, Qualification, examination, and accreditation bodies, Curriculum development agencies, Labour market authorities, chambers, and sectoral bodies, Regional VET governance structures and professional associations.

These actors were selected because of their formal competence in shaping VET qualifications, policies, and system reforms. The number per partner country can vary since responsibilities are sometimes combined. This ensures that the data reflects authoritative perspectives and institutional priorities.

### 3.4 Data Collection

In total, seven interviews, in three different countries, were carried out, involving a broad range of actors such as ministries, national VET agencies, VET provider associations, trade unions, chambers of commerce and labour-market institutions. This diversity of interviewees strengthens the methodological transparency of the study and ensures that the findings reflect multiple perspectives across national VET systems.

All partners used the shared semi-structured interview template [Semi-structured interview template](#) organised into four thematic blocks:

1. Role and Context
2. Policy Priorities
3. Initiatives and Best Practices
4. Future Challenges and Cooperation

The Proof of Coverage document confirms that these interview blocks fully address Task 4.2 requirements, ensuring methodological consistency and alignment with WP4 goals.

The interviews were conducted using a shared semi-structured template, ensuring comparability across countries and stakeholder groups

### 3.5 Procedure

Data collection followed a harmonized sequence:

1. Stakeholder mapping using the guidance document
2. Scheduling and conducting interviews (online or in person)

3. Documentation using the T42\_Analysis\_Format\_Partners\_EN reporting format
4. Collection of supporting materials, such as policy documents or evaluations
5. Submission to the WP lead for cross-country synthesis

This procedure ensured structured, transparent, and reproducible data gathering across all partner countries.

### 3.6 Data Analysis

Analysis was carried out using a standardized thematic synthesis aligned with the four interview blocks. The WP-lead conducted:

- **Initial coding**, categorising all inputs under governance roles, policies, innovations, challenges, and cooperation needs
- **Cross-country comparison**, identifying convergences and divergences across systems
- **Extraction of best practices**, based on criteria from the analysis format (relevance, evidence of success, transferability)
- **Validation** of best practices through available documents, evaluations, or links provided by interviewees

This process ensures analytical rigor and supports the development of a coherent, evidence-informed Deliverable 4.2.

### 3.7 Quality and Ethical Considerations

Quality assurance was maintained through:

- consistent use of shared interview and reporting templates.
- documentation of institutional consent and voluntary participation.
- anonymisation of sensitive statements were appropriate.
- triangulation using supporting policy documents and evaluations.

These measures strengthen the credibility, reliability and ethical integrity of the findings.

### 3.8 Methodological Contribution to Deliverable 4.2

The methodology used in Task 4.2 ensures that the findings presented in this deliverable are comparable, evidence-based and directly aligned with the project's objectives. The shared interview template allowed partners to collect data in a consistent structure across all three countries, while the thematic coding framework enabled the WP lead to synthesise inputs systematically. Together with the diversity of stakeholders interviewed, the methodology strengthens the reliability of the identified best practices and ensures that the conclusions reflect perspectives from governance, labour-market actors and VET providers.

### 3.9 Framework and Context

VET governance in Europe varies significantly across national systems, yet most systems share a reliance on structured cooperation between public authorities, training providers, labour-market actors and social partners. The VET2Sustain project emphasises four transversal policy themes—digitalisation, inclusion, green transition and internationalisation—reflecting wider European concerns about future labour-market needs, societal cohesion and technological change.

Deliverable 4.2 examines how these themes are reflected in national policies; how governing bodies interpret them and how they shape the design and implementation of best practices. Through this lens, the report contributes to a broader understanding of the systemic conditions under which European VET can remain attractive, relevant and future-ready.

## 4. Analysis

### 4.1 Role and Context

The Finnish interviews highlight a system characterised by national steering combined with strong institutional autonomy. The Ministry of Education and Culture prepares reforms, drafts legislation and steers the system strategically. The Finnish National Agency for Education develops qualification structures and curricula. In addition to teaching, VET institutions are responsible for the recognition and certification of competences. This distribution of responsibilities is complemented by extensive collaboration: ministerial working groups routinely include employers, students, VET providers and other societal actors, which ensures broad legitimacy for policy decisions. AMKE, the Finnish Association of Vocational Education and Training Providers, representing 134 VET providers, plays a bridging role by conveying institutional perspectives to national authorities. From the perspective of earlier project findings, this reflects one of the identified success factors, namely adequate resources together with strong administrative and political support. Interviewees emphasise that autonomy at the provider level enables pedagogical flexibility and

responsiveness to regional labour-market needs. This autonomy is also relevant for attractiveness, because flexible learning solutions and competence based assessment make it easier for students to progress at their own pace and see the direct relevance of their skills in working life.

The Trade Union of Education Finland (OAJ) adds the perspective of teachers and educational staff. Although it has no formal authority over qualifications, it participates in ministry working groups and provides input on legislative reforms. OAJ also engages regularly with student unions and labour-market representatives to ensure that teacher and learner perspectives are considered in national VET policy.

The Dutch system relies on two central actors: the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science, which designs national policy and funding frameworks, and “Samenwerkingsorganisatie Beroepsonderwijs Bedrijfsleven” (SBB), which operationalises the relationship between VET institutions and employers. SBB is responsible for accrediting training companies, maintaining qualification dossiers and supporting VET colleges in ensuring the quality of work-based learning. Interviewees emphasise that national-level agreements, such as the Stagepact and the “Beroeps Begeleidende Leerweg” (BBL) Offensive, illustrate the Dutch system’s capacity for coordinated action across government, employers and VET institutions. This cohesive governance structure enables the country to implement reforms rapidly and uniformly.

The German interviews illustrate a governance model rooted in the dual system, where responsibility is shared between educational authorities and the chambers of commerce or crafts. Region Hannover oversees vocational and special schools, including infrastructure, staffing and development planning. However, the chambers hold statutory authority over qualifications, examinations and certification. HWK Hannover oversees training contracts, company development and the recognition of foreign qualifications. The dual nature of the system requires intensive cooperation, which is reflected in joint initiatives such as dropout-prevention programmes and labour-market integration support for newcomers. The dual system is also an important factor for VET attractiveness, since the strong involvement of companies provides clear labour market signalling. This aligns with the success factor emphasising close connections between VET and working life.

## 4.2 Policy Priorities

### 4.2.1 Digitalisation

Digitalisation is a prominent theme across all countries. Finland has implemented digital tools and systems widely, although funding limitations have constrained further developments. Tension exists between the efficiency of digital learning and the need for greater face-to-face support, especially given student wellbeing concerns. Interview insights show that Finland aims to modernise VET in a way that preserves educational equity and maintains a balanced mix of digital and in-person learning.

The Netherlands is modernising its VET system in various areas, with digitalisation integrated into continuous system improvements. Interviewees indicated that the Dutch policy direction focuses on

maintaining an agile system that stays closely connected to employers, using digital tools to support quality and consistency.

Germany has incorporated digitalisation into training regulations and administrative processes, and chambers are adapting examinations to reflect technological changes. Stakeholders emphasised that these developments are intended to keep the dual system aligned with technological shifts in the labour market and to ensure its continued relevance.

#### 4.2.2 Green Transition

The Finnish system integrates sustainability into qualification structures, though the green transition is not currently a primary political driver. Even so, the interviews suggest a long-term intention to remain aligned with European sustainability developments by keeping environmental competences embedded within qualifications.

The Netherlands approaches the green transition through international cooperation frameworks and sector-based initiatives. According to interviewees, this reflects an effort to stay connected to European innovation ecosystems and to strengthen VET responsiveness through cross-border collaboration.

Germany embeds climate and energy-related competences into training regulations. This reflects a broader national ambition to prepare future skilled workers for the demands of the energy transition and to equip sectors with the competences needed to meet climate policy goals.

#### 4.2.3 Inclusion

Finland's policies historically prioritised inclusion and equal access, though this theme has recently received less political emphasis. Stakeholders noted that the core rationale behind Finland's approach remains intact: ensuring that all learners can access upper-secondary education and that VET continues to function as an inclusive pathway.

The Trade Union of Education in Finland (OAJ) underlines that VET attractiveness also depends on adequate learning support and sufficient lesson hours for students. The union notes challenges in maintaining basic skills and ensuring opportunities for lifelong learning, as recent policy changes have reduced staff training possibilities. These developments make it harder for teachers to update competences in areas such as digitalisation, inclusion and sustainability.

The Netherlands treats inclusion as a central objective, with the Stagepact focusing on eliminating internship discrimination and strengthening supervision. Interviewees highlighted that these measures are meant to promote fairness in work-based learning and to support equal opportunities across the system.

Germany focuses strongly on supporting newly arrived trainees and learners with diverse linguistic backgrounds. According to the interviews, these efforts are motivated by the need to secure a stable future workforce and to ensure that migrant learners can successfully enter and complete vocational pathways.

#### 4.2.4 Internationalisation

Internationalisation is structurally embedded in Finland's VET system through participation in European processes, though mobility targets remain difficult to achieve. Finnish stakeholders underlined that international cooperation is viewed as essential for maintaining competitiveness and enriching the learning experience.

The Netherlands actively promotes international internships and leverages mobility as a strategic asset. Interviewees described internationalisation to boost VET attractiveness and equip learners for increasingly globalised labour markets.

Germany shows clear interest in developing cross-border training modules and learning units. This reflects a growing desire to broaden the dual system with additional learning opportunities and to strengthen alignment with European skill needs.

### 4.3 Initiatives and Best Practices

#### 4.3.1 Finland

The 2018 VET reform stands out as a significant national innovation, introducing competence-based qualifications and highly flexible learning pathways. Interviewees from the Ministry of Education and Culture emphasise that despite initial resistance from some educators, the reform is now widely accepted and internationally recognised. The legislative guarantee ensuring every student a place in upper-secondary education is another important Finnish practice, supporting equal access and reducing dropout. This reform aligns with several success factors identified earlier in the project, such as strong cooperation with working life, practical and competence based learning and clear progression pathways.

The Vaasa Energy Cluster illustrates how a regional ecosystem can drive the green transition by bringing together energy companies, VET institutions, universities and multilingual learner groups to develop sustainability competences in real-life training environments. The regional Good Work in Kainuu programme focuses on improving workplace wellbeing, strengthening supervisory and leadership skills and supporting sustainable employability in local companies. By helping employers create better conditions for onboarding and guiding learners, the programme indirectly enhances VET attractiveness and the quality of work-based learning opportunities in the region. The *Taitotehdas* ('Skill Factory') model complements these efforts by providing flexible, practice-oriented learning environments that simulate workplace settings, enabling learners to acquire competences rapidly and follow personalised pathways, even in regions with limited training companies. Together, these initiatives stand out as best practices because they align practical learning with strong labour-market cooperation and regional development needs, which are key factors in VET attractiveness.

From the Trade union of Education's perspective, continuous professional development for teachers is a key condition for successful VET reform. Regular surveys among staff help identify development needs and support national discussions on maintaining quality. Although not a specific project, this systemic focus on staff competences complements Finland's competence-based model.

#### 4.3.2 The Netherlands

The Stagepact 2023–2027 exemplifies an integrated national policy effort to improve internship quality, strengthen supervision and address discrimination in work-based learning. The BBL Offensive further strengthens the position of work-based learning by setting explicit targets for increasing participation. Both initiatives rely on cooperation between government, employer organisations and VET colleges.

SBB itself functions as a structural best practice: a formalised national partnership that manages qualification files and links education with industry.

Taken together, these initiatives are considered best practices because they combine strong national level coordination, close cooperation between VET institutions and employers and well-structured opportunities for practical, work based learning, all of which are closely linked to the factors that strengthen the attractiveness of VET.

#### 4.3.3 Germany

Germany offers clear examples of targeted support infrastructure:

- The Training Manager project in Region Hannover provides on-site guidance for newly arrived trainees, linking language support, workplace learning and school-based training.
- “Umsteigen statt aussteigen” offers guidance to students who consider leaving university, helping them transition into VET and thereby reducing dropout risk.
- HWK Hannover's primAQ initiative supports training companies by helping them analyse and improve their training processes. The initiative has been used for more than a decade and includes a quality matrix to support companies in strengthening their training culture.

They qualify as best practices because they provide structured, targeted support for learners and training companies, addressing several factors linked to VET attractiveness, such as practical learning, clear guidance and strong cooperation with working life.

## 4.4 Future Challenges and Cooperation

Across the three countries, demographic change is widely acknowledged as a key threat to VET attractiveness and labour-market supply. Finland faces declining youth cohorts and regional depopulation, which reduce the number of potential learners and increase pressure on VET institutions.

Finland has undergone substantial budget reductions in continuous learning and VET, limiting capacity for development and innovation. Earlier project findings show that adequate resources and strong administrative support are important for VET attractiveness, which makes funding cuts a significant long term risk.

The Trade Union of Education in Finland (OAJ) warns that reduced funding for lifelong learning and changes to training-related tax deductions may weaken staff development and limit the system's ability to respond to future competence needs. Ensuring sufficient resources for teachers is therefore seen as essential for sustaining VET attractiveness.

The Netherlands experiences a similar contradiction: while the labour market requires more VET graduates, the number of potential students is decreasing. Germany's challenges focus both on shortage of skilled workers and on integrating learners with diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds. Resource constraints intensify these challenges.

Germany's challenges focus both on the shortage of skilled workers and on the integration of learners from increasingly diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds. Interviewees also noted that adapting training and examinations to digitalisation and AI requires significant effort, while many successful initiatives depend on temporary project funding, which limits long-term scalability.

Despite these constraints, interviewees across countries see clear opportunities for cooperation. Germany expresses interest in learning from best practices in other countries, including potential cross-border training modules. Finland and the Netherlands highlight the value of sharing approaches related to internationalisation, sustainability and inclusion.

Across all three countries, the challenges identified in the interviews relate directly to the success factors highlighted earlier in the project, particularly sufficient resources, strong cooperation with working life and accessible learning pathways, making these areas central to maintaining and improving VET attractiveness. These challenges also connect with the core themes of the VET2sustain project, particularly digitalisation, the green transition and inclusion.

## 4.5 Comparative Analysis Across Countries

The interviews show that Finland, the Netherlands and Germany operate within distinct governance frameworks, yet share common values relating to quality, labour-market relevance and cooperation. Interviewees highlighted opportunities for **cooperation between the three countries' VET systems**, particularly in areas such as international mobility, sustainability competences and the exchange of models for supporting diverse learners. Finland specialises in competence-based qualifications and equity-driven access; the Netherlands in national partnership models and coordinated system-wide initiatives; and Germany in the dual system, with strong labour-market integration and targeted learner support.

These differences provide opportunities for cross-country learning. Finland's competence-based reform offers insights into personalised learning paths; the Dutch Stagepact and SBB model provide examples of system-wide coordination; and Germany's Training Manager and primAQ initiatives demonstrate how structured support can enhance training quality and learner success.

In summary, the comparative analysis indicates that although the three systems differ in structure and emphasis, the core elements that support VET attractiveness are broadly shared. These align with the success factors identified earlier in the project, namely close cooperation with working life, societal appreciation of VET, sufficient resources and administrative support, practical learning opportunities, high quality and up to date training and clear progression routes. The interviews also show that national policy directions connect in different ways with the key themes of VET2sustain, particularly digitalisation, the green transition and inclusion. These shared priorities provide a basis for mutual learning and highlight areas where countries can further strengthen VET attractiveness in line with the aims of the project.

## 5. Synthesis and Conclusions

### 5.1 Key Insights

The interviews confirm that VET attractiveness is determined not only by programmes and pathways but by the systemic structures that support learners and strengthen cooperation between institutions and labour-market actors. Strong governance structures, flexible learning pathways, responsive labour-market collaboration and inclusive approaches all contribute to high-quality VET systems.

### 5.2 Implications for Policy and Practice

The best practices identified in this report illustrate that meaningful improvements in VET systems often result from clear governance arrangements, structured cooperation and long-term investments in learner support and training quality. These practices provide inspiration for policies aiming to increase VET attractiveness in different national contexts.

### 5.3 Lessons Learned for Future Cooperation

The evidence collected in Deliverable 4.2, together with the student perspectives captured in Deliverable 4.1, forms a robust basis for developing future recommendations within WP4. The findings highlight opportunities for deeper cross-border cooperation in areas such as international mobility, sustainability competences, digital innovation and inclusive training pathways.

These findings provide a shared basis for further work in the VET2sustain project, particularly in relation to the core themes of digitalisation, the green transition and inclusion, which are central to the next stages of the project's development work.

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## 7. Annexes

### 7.1 Semi-structured interview template

This annex contains the complete semi-structured interview protocol used by all partners during Task 4.2. It includes all four thematic blocks: Role and Context, Policy Priorities, Initiatives and Best Practices, and Future Challenges and Cooperation.

#### **Semi-Structured Interview Template**

Use this interview format during discussions with national authorities and qualification awarding bodies. Complete one document per interview.

#### **General Information**

**Date:**

**Location / Online:**

**Organisation:**

**Name + position of interviewee(s):**

#### **Block 1 – Role and Context**

1. What is the role of your organisation within the national VET system?
2. What authority do you have regarding qualifications, recognition, and certification?
3. How do you collaborate with VET schools, employers, and other stakeholders?
4. How are students and the labour market involved in your policies and activities?

#### **Block 2 – Policy Priorities**

5. What current policy measures are in place to increase the attractiveness of VET?
6. How are the following themes reflected in your policies/programmes? (Digitalisation, Green transition, Inclusion, Internationalisation)

#### **Block 3 – Initiatives and Best Practices**

7. Can you provide 1–2 concrete examples of successful initiatives/projects that you consider effective?
8. What factors contributed to the success of these initiatives (funding, partnerships, regulations, etc.)?

9. Are there evaluations or documents available that describe these initiatives? (→ link or attachment)
10. Which aspect do you consider most essential for strengthening the attractiveness of vocational education and training from the perspective of potential applicants

#### **Block 4 – Future, Challenges, and Cooperation**

10. What main challenges or obstacles do you foresee for VET in your country/region in the next 3–5 years?
11. What factors make it difficult to scale up or broadly implement successful initiatives?
12. Where do you see opportunities for better cooperation with VET providers and international partners?
13. How can our project (VET2Sustain) contribute to your policy goals?

#### **Conclusion and Follow-up**

Main insights (summary by interviewer):

Agreed follow-up actions (e.g. further contact, participation in workshop, sharing documents):

## 7.2 Analysis format for partners

This annex presents the Task 4.2 Analysis Format used by partners to summarise interview findings in a harmonised structure, ensuring comparability across countries. The template contains predefined sections and criteria for identifying best practices.

### Analysis format

Use this document to summarise the key insights and best practices after your interviews. This ensures that all data is comparable and can be easily compiled into the final report (D4.2).

### Instructions

1. Complete this format for each interview conducted.
2. Summarise the key points per section (no full transcripts, max. 3 bullets per question).
3. Select at least 2 best practices and describe them in the final section.
4. Add relevant documents, links, or evaluations (as attachments or hyperlinks).

### Block 1 – Role and Context

Role of the organisation within the VET system:

- →

Authority regarding qualifications, recognition, and certification:

- →

Collaboration with VET schools, employers, and stakeholders:

- →

Involvement of students and the labour market in policies:

- →

### Block 2 – Policy Priorities

Main policy measures to increase VET attractiveness:

- →

How the following themes are reflected in policies (Digitalisation, Green transition, Inclusion, Internationalisation):

- →

### **Block 3 – Initiatives and Best Practices**

Examples of successful initiatives/projects (brief description):

- →

Success factors of these initiatives:

- →

Available documents/links/evaluations:

- →

### **Block 4 – Future, Challenges, and Cooperation**

Main challenges/obstacles for the next 3–5 years:

- →

Barriers for scaling up/successful implementation:

- →

Opportunities for better cooperation with VET providers and international partners:

- →

How VET2Sustain can contribute to national policy goals:

- →

### **Block 5 – Best Practices (Summary)**

Describe at least 2 best practices from your country/region:

Best practice 1:

- Title

- Short description
- Success factors
- Relevant links/documents

Best practice 2:

- Title
- Short description
- Success factors
- Relevant links/documents

- →

## 7.3 Proof of coverage

This annex contains the Proof of Coverage matrix, demonstrating that all partners interviewed the correct categories of stakeholders in alignment with Task 4.2 requirements. The matrix confirms that all thematic areas and governance levels were covered.

### Proof of Coverage – T4.2 Interview Questions

This document demonstrates how the semi-structured interview questions fully address the requirements of Task 4.2 (Inventory) and provide the necessary input for Deliverable 4.2 (Report on Best Practices).

Requirement	Interview Questions / Blocks	Coverage Explanation
Identify role of national authorities and qualification awarding bodies	Block 1 – Role and Context (Q1–Q4)	Captures the organisation’s role, authority, collaboration, and involvement of stakeholders.
Collect policy measures and strategies related to VET attractiveness	Block 2 – Policy Priorities (Q5–Q6)	Asks directly about current policies and how key themes (digitalisation, green, inclusion, internationalisation) are embedded.
Map initiatives and best practices	Block 3 – Initiatives and Best Practices (Q7–Q9)	Gathers concrete examples, success factors, and supporting documents or evaluations.
Identify challenges, barriers, and future outlook	Block 4 – Future, Challenges, and Cooperation (Q10–Q11)	Highlights obstacles, difficulties in scaling, and anticipates future risks.
Identify opportunities and recommendations for cooperation	Block 4 – Future, Challenges, and Cooperation (Q12–Q13)	Explores opportunities for collaboration and links the project (VET2Sustain) to policy goals.
Ensure input for Deliverable 4.2 (best practices report)	All blocks + Conclusion/Follow-up	Combines roles, policies, best practices, challenges, and opportunities into a comparable dataset for the D4.2 report.

Conclusion: The interview design ensures that all elements of Task 4.2 are addressed and that the collected data can be directly synthesised into Deliverable 4.2.

## 7.4 Example of stakeholders and interviewees

This document provides examples of people and roles that can be interviewed under Task 4.2 (Inventory). These interviewees represent national authorities, qualification awarding bodies, and other key stakeholders, and their input will contribute directly to Deliverable 4.2 (Report on Best Practices).

### **National / Governmental level**

- Officials from the Ministry of Education responsible for VET policy
- Representatives from the National Qualifications Authority
- Members of curriculum development agencies (who design/approve VET qualifications)
- Policy officers from the National Employment Agency / Labour Market Authority

### **Regional / Local level**

- Regional education boards responsible for implementing VET policies
- Representatives of chambers of commerce, crafts or industry associations
- Local government officers working on youth, labour market, or education policies

### **Awarding and accreditation bodies**

- Staff from examination boards or certification agencies
- Representatives from professional associations (e.g. engineering, healthcare, IT)

### **Stakeholder organisations**

- Leaders of employers' associations or sector skills councils
- Trade union representatives involved in skills development and VET
- NGOs or foundations focused on inclusion, green transition, or digitalisation in VET

## 7.5 Interview analysis Germany

### 7.5.1 Germany analysis 1

#### **Block 1 – Role and Context**

Role of the organisation within the VET system:

- Hanover region: responsible for 12 vocational schools and 16 special schools
- responsible for management, facilities and staffing
- responsible for conceptual development and school development planning

Authority regarding qualifications, recognition, and certification:

- The Hanover region has no authority in this matter, as this lies with the chambers.

Collaboration with VET schools, employers, and stakeholders:

- Welcome Centre: Establishment of a network for employers → targeted support in securing skilled workers and in the area of further training
- Various projects for vocational schools

Involvement of students and the labour market in policies:

- Project „Umsteigen statt aussteigen“ (“Switch instead of drop out”): cooperative programme with partners from universities, colleges, chambers and the Employment Agency

Goal: to offer open-ended advice and guidance for young people who want to drop out of their studies and reorient themselves, e.g. towards vocational educational training

#### **Block 2 – Policy Priorities**

Main policy measures to increase VET attractiveness:

RegioLab Plus: supports employers in training and further education and brings them together

Fachkräfteallianz (Skilled Workers Alliance): The main objective of the regional Skilled Workers Alliance is to secure the skilled worker base in the Hanover region in the long term and to make it future-proof in view of the challenges ahead.

How the following themes are reflected in policies (Digitalisation, Green transition, Inclusion, Internationalisation):

Digitalisation of administrative work processes

Social Innovation Centre: support for non-profit start-ups and business models

Integration of topics such as digitalisation and entrepreneurial spirit in schools (Project Future Preneur)

### **Block 3 – Initiatives and Best Practices**

Examples of successful initiatives/projects (brief description):

Ausbildungsmanager ('Training Manager') project: supporting newly arrived trainees with language skills and arranging language courses

Interface between vocational schools, companies and language courses

In Ausbildung ('In Training') project in cooperation with the Ministry of Education and Cultural Affairs

#### **Success factors of these initiatives:**

Close network with job centres, employment agencies and chambers of commerce

Commitment of the training manager as a decisive factor

Challenges posed by financial resources and a heterogeneous target group

Available documents/links/evaluations:

[https://www.wirtschaftsfoerderung-hannover.de/de/Fachkraefte/Nachwuchsfoerderung/Berufliche\\_Ausbildung/Ausbildungsmanager\\_in.php](https://www.wirtschaftsfoerderung-hannover.de/de/Fachkraefte/Nachwuchsfoerderung/Berufliche_Ausbildung/Ausbildungsmanager_in.php)

#### **Ideas to raise the attractiveness of VET**

Lack of knowledge about opportunities in vocational training and career advancement

Need for more individualised counselling and more targeted career guidance

Improvement of financial situation and work-life balance

#### **Block 4 – Future, Challenges, and Cooperation**

Main challenges/obstacles for the next 3–5 years:

Skills shortage and integration of immigrant skilled workers

Financial bottlenecks due to low training allowances

Housing shortage for trainees, affordable housing

Barriers for scaling up/successful implementation:

Financial resources for implementing these project-based measures

#### **Opportunities for better cooperation with VET providers and international partners:**

Insights into best practice initiatives from other countries to increase the attractiveness of vocational education and training

#### **How VET2Sustain can contribute to national policy goals:**

Insights into best practice projects from other countries would be exciting in order to develop common ideas and goals.

#### **Block 5 – Best Practices (Summary)**

Describe at least 2 best practices from your country/region:

Best practice 1:

Title: “Ausbildungsmanager” Training Manager Project, Hanover Region:

Objective: To create additional language support programmes and link them to other support services in order to improve access to and chances of success in vocational training for newly arrived trainees.

The training manager is continuously available on site and supports vocational schools, trainees and their training companies. In an interface role, he/she coordinates the various concerns of the network and provides a forum for exchange.

**Success factors:**

- Close network with the job centre, employment agency, chamber of crafts and chamber of industry and commerce
  - Background of the training manager: was himself active in the business world and knows the needs of the network partners
  - Financial subsidies that finance the position of training manager
- Relevant links/documents

[https://www.wirtschaftsfoerderung-hannover.de/de/Fachkraefte/Nachwuchsfoerderung/Berufliche\\_Ausbildung/Ausbildungsmanger\\_in.php](https://www.wirtschaftsfoerderung-hannover.de/de/Fachkraefte/Nachwuchsfoerderung/Berufliche_Ausbildung/Ausbildungsmanger_in.php)

**Best practice 2:**

Title: "Umsteigen statt aussteigen" ("Switch instead of drop out"), Hanover Region

cooperative programme with partners from universities, colleges, chambers and the

Employment Agency

Objective: to offer open-ended advice and guidance for young people who want to drop

out of their studies and reorient themselves, e.g. towards vocational educational training

**Success factors:**

Close network with the job centre, employment agency, chamber of crafts and chamber of industry and commerce

Independence of advice

systemic, individual-centred counselling

## Relevant links/documents

[https://www.wirtschaftsfoerderung-hannover.de/de/Microsites/Umsteigen/Umsteigen\\_statt\\_Aussteigen.php](https://www.wirtschaftsfoerderung-hannover.de/de/Microsites/Umsteigen/Umsteigen_statt_Aussteigen.php)

## 7.5.2 Germany analysis 2

Dr. Carl-Michael Vogt, Permanent Deputy Chief Executive of the Hanover Chamber of Skilled Crafts,  
04.11.2025

### **Block 1 – Role and Context**

Role of the organisation within the VET system:

Responsible authority for dual training and vocational education in the chamber district

Responsible for training contracts, company development and examinations

Certification of complex, labour market-related qualifications from journeyman level upwards

#### **Authority regarding qualifications, recognition, and certification:**

Responsible authority for conducting journeyman's and final examinations as well as advanced training and further education examinations up to and including master craftsman examinations

Recognition of foreign educational qualifications from journeyman level upwards (reference qualifications)

**not responsible for levels below journeyman level**

#### **Collaboration with VET schools, employers, and stakeholders:**

Dual system implies: Close cooperation with vocational schools and companies to promote professional competence à cooperation between learning locations

Important cooperation with employers' associations and trade unions as social partners; these are also represented on examination boards and committees and develop, for example, training regulations.

#### **Involvement of students and the labour market in policies:**

Inclusion of the labour market as a framework for professional competence

Around 40% of pupils leave general education with university entrance qualifications, so we are targeting this group with the aim of attracting them to vocational training

Attracting students who have changed or dropped out of their studies to dual training through individual counselling

## **Block 2 – Policy Priorities**

Main policy measures to increase VET attractiveness:

Striving for legal equality between vocational and academic education, including financial equality with regard to state funding for vocational training

Promoting further education and training through political measures such as the Aufstiegs-BAföG (Upgrading Training Assistance Act)

How the following themes are reflected in policies (Digitalisation, Green transition, Inclusion, Internationalisation):

Integrating digitalisation, climate change/energy policy, inclusion and internationalisation into training regulations on the basis of compulsory instruction also increases the attractiveness of energy-related training courses (e.g. HVAC plant mechanics).

Inclusion officers at the Chamber of Skilled Crafts advise companies on inclusion-friendly training and connect companies.

Internationalisation: also a key topic in further development and cooperation.

## **Block 3 – Initiatives and Best Practices**

Examples of successful initiatives/projects (brief description):

primAQ: Initiative to improve the quality of vocational training (for over 10 years)

primAQ = excellent training quality

see Block 5 for further information

### **Success factors of these initiatives:**

Proximity to the company and individual adaptation to its development

Willingness to change, growing pains

Development of a matrix for defining operational training quality at the macro and micro levels

**Available documents/links/evaluations:**

<https://www.hwk-hannover.de/artikel/ausbildungsqualitaet-verbessern-23,0,2323.html>

Matrix training quality (see appendix)

Increasing the attractiveness of vocational training

Emphasising vocational training as an opportunity and a starting point, not as a dead end

Highlighting the meaningfulness and passion in material and emotional activities

- Importance of appreciation, respect and feedback from trainers and companies

**Block 4 – Future, Challenges, and Cooperation**

Main challenges/obstacles for the next 3–5 years:

Integration of people with diverse backgrounds and nationalities (around 70 different ones in the Hanover chamber district) into training

Adaptation to new learning formats through digitalisation and AI in training and examinations. Preservation of a holistic approach to vocational training as opposed to modular fragmentation

**Barriers for scaling up/successful implementation:**

Ignoring current developments and challenges, e.g. at company level, instead of helping to develop and implement solutions

**Opportunities for better cooperation with VET providers and international partners:**

Develop low-threshold cross-border learning units, e.g. between Germany and France as part of baker and confectioner training.

**How VET2Sustain can contribute to national policy goals:**

developing a shared awareness that we are working together internationally to make vocational education and training attractive and sustainable for the future

### **Block 5 – Best Practices (Summary)**

Describe at least 2 best practices from your country/region:

#### **Best practice 1: primAQ: improvement in the quality of training**

In the face of increasing competition for young talent, craft businesses need to come up with compelling arguments if they want to continue attracting young people to apprenticeships in the skilled trades and convince them to join their own training programmes.

High-quality training is the best way to attract young people. And once an apprentice has been recruited, the aim is to retain them and ensure they graduate with good results.

The Hanover Chamber of Skilled Trades supports training companies with suggestions, useful documents and attractive further training opportunities to optimise the quality of their training. And to obtain certification for good training.

#### **Success factors**

- Willingness of companies to change
- Openness regarding their own internal processes in dual training

#### **Relevant links/documents**

<https://www.hwk-hannover.de/artikel/ausbildungsqualitaet-verbessern-23,0,2323.html>

Matrix training quality (see appendix)

## 7.6 Analysis Finland

### 7.6.1 Finland analysis 1

AMKE: Patrik Pahlman / Katarina Sandbacka and Anne-Mari Behm

#### **Block 1 – Role and Context**

##### **Role of the organisation within the VET system:**

→ AMKE represents 134 Finnish VET providers, of which 87 are members. It acts as an advocacy organisation protecting their interests and supporting the development of vocational education and training in Finland.

##### **Authority regarding qualifications, recognition, and certification:**

→ AMKE itself has no formal authority over qualifications or certification; each VET institution manages its own operations. The Ministry of Education and Culture is responsible for legislation. AMKE's role is to influence policy and ensure that members' perspectives are considered.

##### **Collaboration with VET schools, employers, and stakeholders:**

→ Cooperation occurs mainly through dialogue with member organisations and other interest groups. AMKE facilitates idea exchange, advocacy and cooperation but does not operate directly with individual employers or employees.

##### **Involvement of students and the labour market in policies:**

→ Collaboration with student and employee organisations exists but contact with employers is limited to specific events or invited presentations.

#### **Block 2 – Policy Priorities**

##### **Main policy measures to increase VET attractiveness:**

→ Current measures focus on operational and financial management reforms and improved learning support.

→ Stronger communication between decision-makers and educational institutions is being promoted.

→ Political discussion ahead of the 2027 elections VET centres on continuous learning, education levels, and employability.

##### **How themes are reflected in policies (Digitalisation, Green transition, Inclusion, Internationalisation):**

→ Digitalisation: Increasing use due to cost savings, but tension exists between digital learning and the need for more face-to-face teaching.

- Green transition: Integrated into broader policy frameworks but not specifically prioritised at present.
- Inclusion: Prominent during the previous government term, less visible currently.
- Internationalisation: A key concern—EU target is 12% VET mobility, while Finland is only at 5%. Funding cuts in VET limit the ability to meet this goal.

### **Block 3 – Initiatives and Best Practices**

#### **Examples of successful initiatives/projects:**

- Finland’s competence-based VET system reform, linking learning closely to workplace training.
- Continuous learning system offering flexible education opportunities for all, though recently affected by funding cuts.
- Equal access to education – every student completing basic education is guaranteed a place in further education.

#### **Success factors of these initiatives:**

- Strong access to education, flexibility and choice for learners.
- Effective cooperation within the education system and positive international recognition.
- The competence-based model supports lifelong learning and employability.

#### **Available documents/links/evaluations:**

### **Block 4 – Future, Challenges, and Cooperation**

#### **Main challenges/obstacles for the next 3–5 years:**

- Reduced government funding for continuous learning could worsen skill shortages.
- Need to assess the future structure and number of VET providers.
- Balancing savings with maintaining quality education and equality of access.

#### **Barriers for scaling up/successful implementation:**

- Tight national budgets limit implementation capacity.
- Excessive cuts in 2024 made adaptation difficult for institutions.

#### **Opportunities for better cooperation with VET providers and international partners:**

- Enhanced cooperation in RDI (research, development, innovation) between VET institutions, companies and universities of applied sciences.
- Sharing facilities and resources with enterprises.
- At EU level, more exchange and understanding of different systems; potential cooperation examples include Ireland and the Netherlands.

**How VET2Sustain can contribute to national policy goals:**

→ Dissemination of project results via AMKE's national channels.

→ Support for strengthening continuous learning, sustainability and internationalisation in Finnish VET.

**Block 5 – Best Practices (Summary)**

Describe at least 2 best practices from your country/region:

**Best Practice 1:**

**Title:** Competence-Based VET Reform

**Short description:** Integration of workplace learning into the VET curriculum, ensuring that students demonstrate skills in real work environments.

**Success factors:** Strong link to the labour market, flexibility in learning paths, continuous assessment of competence.

**Relevant links/documents:**

**Best Practice 2:**

**Title:** Equal Access to Further Education

**Short description:** Every student completing basic education in Finland is guaranteed a place in further education, ensuring social equity and lifelong learning opportunities.

**Success factors:** Strong national commitment to educational equity, clear legislation, and a network of diverse VET providers ensuring access for all learners.

**Relevant links/documents**

**Best Practice 3**

**Title:** Vaasa Energy Cluster - Model for Regional Cooperation

**Short description:** A regional ecosystem combining companies, educational institutions, and language groups to promote energy expertise and sustainability.

**Success factors:** Strong collaboration across sectors, shared goals in sustainability, and effective communication channels among stakeholders.

**Relevant links/documents:**

7.6.2 Finland analysis 2

**General Information**

Date: 14.11.2025

Location / Online:

Organisation: Trade Union of Education Finland

Name + position of interviewee(s): Eira Bani, Education Policy manager

**Block 1 – Role and Context**

1. What is the role of your organisation within the national VET system?

we follow the development of vocational education, legislation, teachers' and other educational staff's working conditions and advocate their interests eg. in all those mentioned matters. We have close contacts with Ministry of Education and co-operate in various working groups Min. of Ed. has established, therefore we influence or at least try to influence to the new or changing legislation. During last few years there have been several government bills and reforms, and for all those we form/write an opinion and give it to officials or to who it may concern

2. What authority do you have regarding qualifications, recognition, and certification?

no official authority, only influencing through various partners, Ministry and Board of Education

3. How do you collaborate with VET schools, employers, and other stakeholders?

we educate the members, who work for VET colleges/schools ( both teachers and principals/heads of unit etc.) in various ways. We also meet regularly education organizers and their representatives (associations, unions) and other stakeholders who work or influence to the development of vocational education or working life.

4. How are students and the labour market involved in your policies and activities?

very closely, we regularly meet with students' union representatives and labour market representatives. We try to find common views and shared opinions with those partners to influence to the politicians and government officials

**Block 2 – Policy Priorities**

1. What current policy measures are in place to increase the attractiveness of VET?

European Union of Skills has launched a plan to improve high quality education, training, and lifelong learning. OAJ is preparing the goals for the parliamentary elections to bring up those points of views. We implement surveys to find out what are the main needs to develop or better in vet-education, teachers and principals/middle managers working conditions. Current challenge is to guarantee full working days for

students and enough lessons and support to learn basic skills and general knowledge (common subjects) at school

2. How are the following themes reflected in your policies/programmes? (Digitalisation, Green transition, Inclusion, Internationalisation)

all these above mentioned has to be taken in to consideration when developing education and working conditions. We point out that teachers have to be able to broaden their knowledge and skills continuously, especially within those themes. Unfortunately the current government has weakened the possibilities of life-long-learning and still the legislation-to-come (about basics of financing of vet and removing the tax deduction for employee training expenses) are weakening the possibilities for staff to keep up and improve their knowledge of those themes.

## 7.7 Analysis The Netherlands

### Summary The Netherlands

Date: 07-11-2025 and 30-10-2025

Location / Online:

Organisation: Ministry of Education, Culture and Science and SBB

Name + position of interviewee(s): Wendy Hoozeboom, Senior policy advisor VET and Daphne Beukers, Policy advisor education and labourmarket

Summary by Mirjam van den Broek MBO Raad (Association of VET colleges)

### Block 3 – Initiatives and Best Practices

#### Example 1

stagepact 2023-2027: various parties are working on four key themes to improve the quality of internships:

Improving internship supervision,

Eliminating internship discrimination,

Providing sufficient internships and

Offering appropriate remuneration.

#### Example 2

BBL-offensief : various parties (ministry, Association of Vet colleges, Employers association) agree to focus on more students in Workbased learning (BBL). The MBO Work Agenda has agreed to increase the number of students in the work-based learning (BBL) from 30% (2024) to 35% (2027)

The minister wrote a Letter to Parliament on progress in improving the attractiveness and accessibility of vocational training (BBL). Minister Bruins (Education, Culture and Science) informs the House of Representatives about the progress of the so-called "BBL offensive." This is an effort by vocational education (MBO) to make the vocational training pathway (BBL) more popular, attractive, and accessible.

### Example 3

As an organization, sbb is a well-organized partnership where VET-education and companies make agreements on national level

8. What factors contributed to the success of these initiatives (funding, partnerships, regulations, etc.)?

Stagepact: some partners (like MBO Raad) received extra funding to help schools to share information and to come together in networks.

9. Are there evaluations or documents available that describe these initiatives? (→ link or attachment)

Not yet. Stagepact and BBL offensief run until 2027.

10. Which aspect do you consider most essential for strengthening the attractiveness of vocational education and training from the perspective of potential applicants

All relevant partners (companies, government, schools) should emphasise the importance of VET.

### Block 4 – Future, Challenges, and Cooperation

10. What main challenges or obstacles do you foresee for VET in your country/region in the next 3–5 years?

The decline in the number of potential students (demographic developments) versus the increasing demand from the labor market for VET graduates.

11. What factors make it difficult to scale up or broadly implement successful initiatives?

Every sector sees itself as essential to the economy

12. Where do you see opportunities for better cooperation with VET providers and international partners?

Dutch VET actively supports student mobility and international internships, often through Erasmus+ and bilateral agreements.

- Nuffic coordinates programs like SCOPE-HE, which foster global partnerships and research in green and digital fields, linking Dutch VET to EU and ASEAN networks.

- Internationalisation is seen as a way to increase attractiveness and competitiveness, preparing students for global labor markets.

## **Learn from each other**

13. How can our project (VET2Sustain) contribute to your policy goals?

We hope to hear about new initiatives which are successful in other countries. We can disseminate ideas in our networks.

## The project consortium

Coordinator



Partners



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