

COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING IN SEVEN EUROPEAN COUNTRIES

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Comparative Analysis of Vocational Education and Training in Seven European Countries

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1 INTRODUCTION

1.2 Background

Over the last few years, research into the development of vocational education and training (VET) systems in both Europe has addressed two main objectives: *first*, contributing to competitiveness and economic growth by providing specific and generic competencies and, *second*, promoting social inclusiveness. These two objectives are becoming increasingly interrelated.

Empirical evidence regarding the differences and similarities of VET students' career aspirations, school success in relation to acquired competencies and their socio-demographic characteristics is indispensable for adjusting VET curricula to learners and employers. One of the key reasons highlighting the need to strengthen research into VET students' learning processes and careers is the persisting magnitude of profiles in the labour market that gravitate towards VET-related occupational structures. The incentives for this are related to the complementarities between formal qualifications and acquired skills, occupational regulations, employment protection, training focus and the implementation of dual and apprentice systems.

In the context of an economic downturn and the growing flexibilisation of the economy, qualification processes are also influenced by demographic pressures, including migration and the problem of the social inclusiveness of the deprived population which increasingly embraces young people. In this context, European policy developments in the area of VET in Europe¹ address the following four main categories:

Curricular developments. Modernisation of the VET system is understood in many countries as programme modularisation and implementation of the learning outcome approach. However, in many cases this is accompanied by the question of whether systems are based on the proper number of programmes. In the event there are too many programmes for too few pupils, on what basis can the programmes be integrated? The question of VET's fusion with general education is particularly sensitive. To some extent, this is also related to the system permeability between VET schools and HE.

Stakeholders' positioning and functions. There is a lot of discussion on how VET can raise its status and reputation. This is linked to the question of the falling enrolments in VET institutions. The problem

¹ As summarised in CEDEFOP 2009 (p. 21), The Helsinki communiqué set four priorities as from 2007:

(a) policy focused on improving the attractiveness and quality of VET; (b) development of common instruments and tools to enhance a European area of VET and a European labour market; (c) strengthening learning from others; and (d) taking all stakeholders on board. Priority 1 refers to policy focused on improving the attractiveness and quality of VET (European Commission, 2006, p. 5), which includes links between VET and working life, better counselling and information in preparation for working life, permeability between VET systems and other structures of education, excellence in skill development.

targets all groups of VET stakeholders such as employers, social partners, deprived groups, immigrants and adults, and seeks answers to how the system can better match their needs.

Implementation of policy tools. The key EU tools currently on the agenda in the EU are the European qualification framework (EQF), the European credit system for VET (ECVET), the European quality assurance framework for VET (EQAVET), and Europass. They aim to support the quality² and attractiveness of VET.

Other issues involve problems and challenges arising in interrelated areas. Examples encompass credentialism and social protection, over-qualification, vertical and horizontal mismatches, along with various problems of employment and employability.

Phenomena related to these issues are already being studied by different employability measures such as educational level attainment, the participation of marginal groups or drop outs. In addition, over the last few years several researchers have been conducting studies on skill anticipation and striving to understand the relations between acquired key competencies and employers' requirements. Yet the sustainability of indicators is difficult since they occur in the context of flexibilisation and the types of constant uncertainties that have emerged.

There are several ways to approach the question of how to construct the most important 'reference-comparison' points for surveying the VET system and learners on the EU level. We mention three of them here. *The first approach* encompasses *comparisons from within*. This approach explores the internal characteristics of a broad domain-specific VET cohort in one country. The elements of comparison are the socio-demographic characteristics of VET students and programme types referring to duration and permeability paths and their sectorial orientation. *The second* is a *comparison from above*. Clearly the VET population can be compared with the population in general education, and only in some respects with the population in primary education, the labour market and other post-secondary educational structures.

The third group encompasses *country comparisons* from the viewpoint of the variety of VET systems. This issue is particularly sensitive since the VET system relates to both education but also various aspects of the world of work. However, some conceptual frameworks have already been developed. One of them is the CATEWE consortium that explored variations and particularities of different national education systems. Some of the consortium's recommendations on country comparisons are related to (CATEWE General Results, 2011-): a) economic developments and labour market characteristics where national value systems play an important role; b) tensions between standardisation and differentiation which includes (inter)national vs. local governance or general vs. vocational orientations; c) vocationalism in education which is predetermined by historical developments, dynamic relationships and labour market regulations. The extent to which VET related characteristics can be compared across nations

² See, for example, Parsons et al., 2009: 90-94 for an overview of qualification requirements (entry, and post-qualification work experience, continuous professional development).

varies to a large extent and in relation to other comparative reference points, including several aspects such as (CEDEFOP, 2009) the recognition of personal growth through learning engagement, preparations for further learning or subject areas, confirming occupational competencies and licensing for practice and updating and continuous professional development.

1.3 Theoretical and conceptual framework

When considering a broad overview of developments in VET, the list of disciplines and theories that can contribute to designing the conceptual and interpretative frame goes far beyond the concerns presented in the earlier section. In addition to methodological theories and approaches, some of the entry points we considered during the 7EU VET project and preparation of this book include: (a) studies on pedagogy that in particular focus on VET teachers and the learning modes of VET students; (b) sociological perspectives studying the overall role of education, labour market dynamics, gender and migration issues; (c) psychological perspectives with studies on individual learning, decision-making processes and motivation that bring particularly important contributions to surveying careers and the determinants of professional success and to the development of the guidance and counselling domain; and (d) in the last year strong interdisciplinary approaches have emerged focusing on competency modelling and work process analyses which is related to establishing the European and national qualification frameworks.

Some of these approaches have referred to the social mobility triangle principle, the so-called Origin, Education and Destination (OED), that is widely accepted by sociologists (e.g. Jackson et al., 2009). It explores causalities among origins, education and professional destinations. The model questions the relative impact of education in comparison to family background and other factors, namely issues widely addressed by several projects and communities (e.g. DECOWE, 2011-), since it addresses one of the basic theoretical questions on how much education really matters, and why (Wolbers and Velden, 2002).

The OECD's Network B, for example, developed a framework for transition systems defined as "the social institutions and processes through which a society provides its members to make the transition from the education system to the employment system" (van der Velden, Wolbers, 2008: 13), focusing on proportions of school-level completion, the level of acquired competencies, the share of school leavers and quality of employment, to mention just a few. Other studies concentrate more on educational processes and school success.

One of the more elaborated holistic developmental models distinguishes between individual success factors and subjective concepts in terms of individual contexts related to career factors. In this way, it studies how career success is influenced by four main components, namely the *context of origin* which

refers to a person's cultural, social, class and educational background as well as their work history, the *context of education* referring chiefly to teaching and learning modes and organisational characteristics, the *context of work experiences* encompassing different issues of work characteristics, and positions and the *context of society and culture* that involves societal and biographical data. The model has been designed in line with the theoretical premises of Mayrhofer *et al.* (2007).

Related to these developments, the book considered various contributions classified by different subject areas. Below we briefly describe only the most generic ones.

Socio-demographic characteristics of VET students

Surveying the socio-demographic characteristics of the VET population in broad terms relates to its gender, age, habits and values. These characteristics are related to so-called *neighbourhood determinants* (Kauppinen, 2008; Gunz and Peiperl, 2007) starting with parents' education, occupation, other employability determinants and income material and residential status, along with household density and tenure. These issues importantly impact behavioural and social aspects of VET students, placing concepts such as "the family stress model", "parental investments" or "environmental toxins" highly up on the research agenda (Brooks-Gunn *et al.*, 2007: 414).

These concepts are on a more general level widely framed by studies of *social stratification* (differentiating social groups by material, occupational and educational status) and *social mobility* (processes that determine social shifts within and among generations) studies and thus offers a great contribution to understanding the social inclusiveness and functions of VET systems and their status. A special focal point in this area relates to *social cohesion and inclusion*.

In relation to the VET process, this area poses several research challenges which we will not be able to address in very much detail. Some of them are discrimination, ethnic and racial stereotypes, religious and cultural differences, ethnic identity formation, assimilation processes and identity development (Graham & Hudley, 2007: 392).

Career Perspectives and Professional Choice

The term "career" is often defined as a sequence of positions and roles the individual occupies during their lifespan (Super, 1957). Key issues in the domain are (Gunz and Peiperl; 2007: 55-56): (a) the link between personality and career success based on the so-called big 5 model; (b) complementary and supplementary approaches to occupational choice between individuals' own perspectives and the environment, including the decision-making process; (c) career counselling development; and (d) the relationship between subjective and objective career success³; and (e) its intersection with social marginalisation. These issues are addressed by four key approaches: a) Holland's (1973) person-environment typology fit approach; b) various economic perspectives; c) developmental career theories; and d) studies on decision-making processes. In this short overview we limit ourselves only to the approaches relevant to our study.

³ For individuals, the meaning of careers and success vary as they progress between life stages and contexts.

The paradigm of *traits and environment* is conceptualised on the idea of fitting the right candidates to proper vocational paths, and was designed already in the early 20th century by Parson (1907). The author stressed the fact that in order to make a proper vocational choice one needs to: a) have knowledge of one's own self, capabilities and interests, (...); b) requirements and conditions of success in work and education related to a certain vocational domain; and c) there should be an established link between both. At that time this approach was contradictory to Taylor's views from early 20 century that focused solely on improving workers' efficiency.

Person-environment approaches were further developed by Holland's (1973) career theory on vocational personalities. This theory establishes the link between personal fit and vocational types: realistic, investigative, artistic, social, enterprising and conventional. On this basis (ibid: 81), one can elaborate further theoretical and practical developments, namely, *personal approach* (the person and environment provide what others want) and *supplementary* (resemblances between the individual and the environment), which can be interrelated to different extents.

Many models address career stages and the links among them. Super (1975), for example, explains how the first exploration stage (birth to adolescence; 0–16) relates to personality formulation, and the development of capacities, interests and attitudes and the broad, second stage (exploratory stage, 15–24) is important for the development of professional interest, early work experiences and hobbies and the third “establishment” stage (25–44) of the implementation of professional expertise and stabilisation.

While each of these overviews and models introduce distinctive approaches and a number of career development stages, they all agree that the age cohort of 17–18 (this population is survey in this book) is still in the exploratory phase. However, there is a large difference between the VET and the general populations. While the population in general education mostly still has time to decide what vocational and career path to follow, the VET population is to some extent determined, at least by a broad professional field, despite the increasingly varied possibilities offered in continuous professional development.

Lastly, it is important to mention that the early stage of vocational identity formation starts already in the family and on this basis continues on the secondary level of vocational education, or post-secondary educational levels. In these stages, students begins with early socialisation and indoctrination into an occupation, which is related to developing vocationally related values, norms and behavioural patterns of a future working environment.

Decision-Making Processes and Factors of Occupational Choice

While the approaches mentioned in the previous section focus on congruency between the person, the environment, and career developmental stages, other approaches stress occupational choice and stages of decision-making processes. The known conception comprehends four phases: orientation, exploration, implementation through to stabilisation (Savickas, 2007: 89). These stages can be observed either

within various positions of an individual career or throughout one's whole career. In our case, the context of career decisions will be limited to the studied population and their particularities related to puberty and biological changes, cognitive changes (the development of abstract thinking), changes in social relations, and the gradual transition towards the labour market (Wagner & Wigfield, 2007: 222). In the processes described above the role of parents' inclusion plays a very central role. The time and ways they spend with children impact autonomy, achievement motivation and value creation (Grolnick et al., 2007: 259). Another important factor characterising this developmental stage is peers as they gradually take over the parents' role and represent an important reference point.

These theoretical foundations eventually lead towards identification of the determinants that impact vocational decisions. Approaches to this vary. Thurow (1975), for example, claims that the prevailing logic for the selection of an educational and vocational path gravitates towards economic dimensions: the probability of getting employment and expected earnings in the first place. Other authors (for example Holland, 1973; Miller, 1984; Thomas and Thomas, 2002) stress personal predispositions and interests are a prime motive. Velden and Wolbers (2004) focus on both, and in addition strongly stress past educational and work experiences.

Another holistic approach to conceptualising the factors of vocational choice has been developed by Grubb (2002). It is, in addition, very much aware of socio-economic trends and accidental events of a certain moment. Author pool of factors includes: the economic component of children, the relative scope of alternatives, personal estimation of the future success of a certain career path, the 'presence' of various events in the decision-making process, and the absence of knowledge which the individual should have been interested in in order to make a proper decision. In addition, the author indicates factors such as the availability of proper information, a network of family and friends, adolescent difficulties in identity formation etc.

Other authors, such as for example Lucas (1997), primarily concentrate on the social environment and reference peers. They both have a crucial impact on the intellectual, social and emotional components of personal development. The aspirations and motives of parents can also be negative as parents often (Pregelj-Arčon, Skrt-Leban, 1998): project their own aspirations on to their children, instil too high ambitions in children or limit children with their own limited knowledge of the employment and work situation. These issues are particularly critical in instances where pupils want to act outside the family tradition.

Theories on motivation

Motivational theories that explain learners' behaviour are best classified in two broad groups. *Content theories*, that study the typology of individual motives and needs, and *process theories* that focus on external factors reinforcing individual behaviours. Hence, the first group studies the personal motivation system and the second environmental factors.

Maslow's (1982) theory on hierarchical needs assumes that all individual needs can be classified in a hierarchical system of physical needs, needs for security and protection, belonging, self-respect and self-realisation – the last is on the top of the hierarchy. It is important to stress that Maslow never claimed that a person always satisfy their lower needs first and then needs of a higher order, only that higher needs cannot be satisfied when lower ones are not realised to a minimum extent (Kline and Ule, 1996: 163). Aldefer's three-level hierarchical theory (1969) is similar but reduces the categories to three, namely needs for existence, relatedness, and growth, while McClelland's differentiation is between achievement, affiliation and the need for power.

Comparable to Maslow's and Aldefer's theories is Herzberg's (1959) two factors theory which states that the behaviour of all individuals abides by the principles of satisfaction and dissatisfaction. Following Herzberg, satisfaction and dissatisfaction represent two distinct paradigms which are mutually independent, hence the opposite of satisfaction is the absence of satisfaction. Satisfaction is dependent on true motivations, labelled intrinsic motivations, while dissatisfaction depends on extrinsic hygienic factors. According to the author, the first group depends on the school and work environment, while the second on the content of work. An important conclusion is therefore that the absence of hygienic factors does not imply a higher motivation (at least not in the longer term), while they can decrease motivation.

Another author in the content theories group is McClelland (1988), with his theory of acquired needs. In contrast to Maslow, Aldefer and Herzberg, the author claims that, rather than individual factors of motivation, there are distinct types of individuals with inherently embedded motivational systems. The three basic types or affiliations are related to achievements, social ties and power.

One of the best known *process theories* is Vroom's expectancy theory (Vroom, 1995). With this theory the author explains behaviour within organisations. Following Vroom, three key processes that complement each other are expectancy, instrumentality and valence. Valence can be positive, negative or indifferent towards an individual's behaviour or role in general. In this way, an individual follows positive situations and avoids negative ones. In this, he estimates the possibility of how well a given task can be accomplished. Instrumentality is the relationship between personal expectations of a proper reward and opinions on the fairness of the rewards. Other authors in this theoretical stream include Locke (1991) with the goal theory and feedback process, and Adams (1963) with equity in which the key focus is on reference points (e.g. the school grades of one's peers).

In the book we have related these theories to the development of indicators for satisfaction, and in relation to learning.

Theories on Learning

In this book we consider learning from information process and situation perspectives. *Information process learning theories* best describe how learning takes place in the classroom, at home and during assessment processes so, put simply, it explains very well the encoding of external information along with the storage and recall of such information. Encoding relates to the processes of perception and

interpretation which are vital for transforming external stimuli into cognitive perceptions. Learning solely based on external stimulation can be explained as the »bottom-up« principle, while learning that is a result of external stimulation and previous knowledge can be explained as the »top-down« principle (Anderson, 1995).

The described topics have a long tradition in cognitive psychology. Among the best known, it is worth mentioning Cyert and March (1963) who concentrated on the »acquiring of information from the environment«, the »distribution of information in the organisation«, the »condensation of outgoing information« and on the different modes of the »transmission of reshaped information from the organisation«. The connection between the abovementioned elements was later studied by several other authors (for instance, Huber, 1991; Lundberg, 1989). Recent psychological approaches have continued this tradition. They focus on studying the optimising of the systems of decoding, memorising, recalling and utilisation of information in various learning situations.

Information process learning is a successful approach in simple contexts where the change of learned behaviour is obvious and consistent. However, in everyday life people often find themselves in situations with no obvious connection between cause and effect or where the reason is unknown. Learning in such contexts is more effectively explained by situation learning theories. In the case of this kind of learning, the key question is how people establish causal connections in new situations via experiences and general rules.

The situation learning theories are based on learning via observation (Bandura, 1969), unlike classical and instrumental conditioning. If the individual recognises that a certain way of behaving is rewarded, he will most likely imitate that behaviour. The level at which this phenomenon unravels can be individual or in a group of people. However, the crucial factor is experience that is often gained in a spontaneous way.

Such an experience exchange often happens in various situations: between the master and the apprentice, between parents and their children, among adolescent peers (classmates), soldiers in the army etc. That is why learning is often connected to the problem of »forgetting« which is most obvious when the individual tries to replace the knowledge he has gained over a longer time in the past.

The basic communication of this theoretical paradigm says that situation learning most often happens in a non-formal way, possibly as an integrated part of some other activity (Revans 1980). In this sense, Wenger (1999) and Grosjean (2003) draw attention to the difference between »knowing the practice« and »knowledge about the practice«. Within this spirit, Maier and others (2003: 24-25) state that learning is not always intentional, individuals imitate the behaviour of those like them, preliminary knowledge is always important (either as an accelerator or inhibitor of learning), learning is formed on the basis of causal connections, and learning is a motivated form of behaviour.

The concept of so-called knowledge management models that link both approaches – information process learning and social learning – hold important implications for our research: they state that the development of occupational competencies is a simultaneous result of information process learning and situation learning. Gherardi and Nikolini (2003) claim that situation learning is distinctively connected to the process of participation in the way an individual becomes a member of the environment. Contrary to the concept of participation, the complementary concept of reflection separates the subject of knowledge and the object of this knowledge: the individual is aware of his knowledge which means he is closer to information process learning. It is only the combination of both learning methods that represents what can be called occupational or professional knowledge.

We can thus conclude that the quality of learning and working depends greatly on suitable learning combinations. Even though the models overlap each other to some extent, each brings a somewhat different stress on the contents.

Competencies and School Success

Studying the determinants of competencies and school knowledge and success represents a focal point of this book. In this way we define *competencies* as the generators of potential for an individual's performance, personal characteristics (traits) as physical characteristics and methods of an individual's response to a situation, self-concept in the sense of habits, values and knowledge in the sense of information that someone has in specific areas (Spencer and Spencer, 1993: 9-10). This definition mostly describes individually acquired competencies, while employers' expectations are labelled required competences. Since the modernisation processes in education in line with the lifelong learning policy principles, competencies have been introduced into education processes.

For individuals, the meaning of *professional success* moves along their career and life stages (Hall, 2002 cf. Demeter, 2010) and encompasses a sharp distinction when it shifts from education to the world of work. However, in both contexts the basic observation of careers distinguishes between objective and subjective career dimensions (Gunz & Peiperl, 2007). Following Mayrhofer et al. (2007), professional success is always relational, referring to person-related aspects of a career, the individual's social origin, work and societal and cultural dimensions. However, there is a clear distinction between success attained at school and success in the labour market. Several authors believe that the theoretical background gained in formal education only has a minor connection with the real work situation (e.g. Svensson, 1990: 52-56). This book focuses in particular on differences and similarities between school grades and perceived acquired competencies during the education process.

We should stress that on the most general level our survey seeks to explore what determines school success in relation to acquired competencies. On the conceptual level, it tries to understand how school success, acquired competencies (vocational expertise, foreign languages, ICT and some generic competencies) and school satisfaction are interrelated.

1.4 Purpose, goals and structure of the book

The initial scientific and research goals of this book were related to questions regarding: (a) perceptions of young people about VET systems and how they see their future possibilities relating to employment, career building and mobility; (b) the efficacy and successfulness of systems in advising and informing; and (c) similarities and differences across countries in the way they should react to the emerging social challenges. Due to recent economic and policy priorities in the EU, ICT tools warranted special attention.

The project entitled “Detailed Methodological Approach to Understanding Vocational Education and Training”, which represents the formal basis of this book, stresses the fact that all findings and recommendations are based on very well elaborated empirical steps, in particular the development of the research instrument and implementation of the large-scale survey in seven EU countries⁴, which are supported by a secondary sources review (legislation, organisation of VET programmes, employment possibilities and permeability with higher education), focus groups, workshops and interviews among VET students, teachers, headmasters and policy makers. This allows an analysis of contextual factors as well as a deeper understanding of the different national contexts of the various education systems. In line with these premises, the following key research goals have been identified, relative to particular research areas, exploring country differences and similarities:

The Transition from Previous Education to VET

- Which are the main drivers of enrolment in VET? How much in fact is the decision to select a particular VET programme predetermined, and in particular what is the impact of socio-demographic characteristics? Do students strive for material rewards or do they respond to intrinsic motives of professionalism?
- What is the relative freedom of VET students in selecting further education in relation to school success, family determination and personal characteristics?
- What is the role of career guidance services and other formal channels in supporting VET students' career choices?

Acquired Competencies

- How well do VET students acquire generic competencies, and to what extent do curricula contribute to their development?
- How are school success and acquired competencies interrelated?

Future Career and Further Education

- Which are VET students' career aspirations? How are they related to types of programmes and their sectoral orientation?

⁴ 7 EU countries: Austria, Germany, Greece, Latvia, Lithuania, Slovenia and the UK

- In which sectors would they like to work? How are these aspirations related to the sectoral orientation of their VET programmes?
- How do VET students see their employability prospects and how do they perceive further education permeability paths?
- How many of them experience international exchange programmes, and what are their experiences?

General Issues

The book explores how gender, parents' education and other socio-demographic characteristics characterise VET systems and their programmes. In particular, it looks for varieties and complementarities between subsystem levels and similarities and differences across countries. This issue is explored on the levels of VET students, schools, national subsystems, and internationally.

Structure of the Book

This book comprises six main chapters. In Chapter 2 we first provide an overview of Socio-demographic characteristics in the 7EU countries. Here we look at place of living and country of origin, gender and programme sector orientation and parents education and socio-economic status. In the Chapter 3 we study the transition from earlier education to vocational education and training what includes perceived status of vocational education and training, factors affecting the decision making of learners with respect to enrolments into VET programmes and considering how do learners judge the importance of different information sources in relation to choosing their VET programmes. In this chapter we consider how wide is the occupational choice of VET learners and, and why. In the Chapter 4 we look into the relationship between school success and other acquired competencies. Chapter 5 explores the future career aspirations and further education of VET students towards their professional career. In this chapter we also look which employment sectors do learners aspire to work in. In the last chapter we draw key conclusions and implications for the development of vet policies.

1.5 Short methodological overview

The approach in this book builds on a review of secondary sources and analyses on the national and EU levels in the development and implementation of quantitative and qualitative studies. The main methodological steps gradually developed during the 7EU VET project's lifespan and different workpackages were: (a) an analysis of key secondary sources and databases of VET developments and policy issues on the EU and national levels; (b) the conducting of over 100 national valorisation workshops and interviews with VET stakeholders; and (c) implementation of the large-scale survey comprising approximately 17,600 VET students, including the holding of workshops with VET learners and the development of an international database.

The target population of 7EU VET was defined as **17–18-year-old pupils in initial VET**, as this population intersects most VET programmes in 7 EU countries. The target population can be found in a variety of VET educational pathways and grades within the education systems (see appendix 1 - Descriptors for less and more demanding programmes for each country for more detailed information). Two-stage random sample design was applied to the 7EU-VET study and the survey has been done either online or with a paper-and-pencil questionnaire, instruments for both modes were developed.

Table 1.1: Realised N net sample size

	Realised N net sample size
Austria	2097
Germany	5377
Greece	2396
Latvia	2926
Lithuania	2641
Slovenia	1197
England (UK)	997
Total	17631

Source: Dahmen, Neuert and Fuchs, 2012.

Overall response rates (considering school level, class level, and student level) within the range of 55 percent to 70 percent were reached in most countries (Dahmen, Neuert and Fuchs, 2012). In this way the developed methodological instrument is an instrument which follows the main principles of the key international surveys such as PISA (The Programme for International Student Assessment), LFS (The Labour Force Survey) or ESS (The European Social Survey).

2 SOCIO-DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS OF VET LEARNERS IN THE 7EU COUNTRIES

The starting points for considering the similarities and differences of VET systems relate to multiple aspects such as adult involvement in lifelong learning, the ratio of graduates between VET graduates and graduates of general education.

There are several possible approaches and sources which offer an international comparison of VET students in Europe. In this section, we only present those which hold relevance to later sections. One of the many possible starting points to look at an international comparison of the VET system is to consider the adult participation in lifelong learning which is becoming increasingly 'an extension' of formal education, and hence indicates to what extent particular EU countries are modernising non-formal education. As Table 2.1 shows, lifelong learning refers to persons aged 25 to 64 who stated that they had received education or training in the four weeks preceding the survey (numerator). The denominator consists of the total population of the same age group, excluding those who did not answer the question on "participation in education and training". The information collected relates to all education or training whether or not it was relevant to the respondent's current or possible future job.

The EU-27 has now reached the participation rate of 8.9 percent but data show that performance has slightly declined since 2005 (9.6 percent). There are significant differences between the countries included in the 7-EU-VET study with Slovenia (15.9 percent), United Kingdom (15.8 percent) and Austria (13.4 percent) being highly above the EU average and Latvia (5.0 percent), Lithuania (5.9 percent) and especially Greece (2.4 percent) highly below the average. Germany's performance is closest to the EU-27 average (7.8 percent), however it is not reaching it.

Countries with the most comprehensive lifelong learning strategies appear to be northern countries (Finland, Sweden and especially Denmark) that all have exceptionally high overall participation rates (more than 20 percent, in the case of Denmark even more than 30 percent). The UK used to be a member of this group, however its performance has gradually declined since 2004 (from 29 percent to 15.8 percent), therefore this data puts it in the second group together with Slovenia, Austria, Luxembourg (13.6 percent) and the Netherlands (16.7 percent). We can compare Germany's result with e.g. Belgium (7.1 percent), Ireland (6.8 percent) and Cyprus (7.5 percent). The results for Lithuania and Latvia can also be compared with France (5.5 percent), Italy (5.7 percent) as well as Poland (4.5 percent). Greece was lowest with only 2.4 percent and falls into the group of worst performing countries together with Bulgaria (1.2 percent), Hungary (2.7 percent), Romania (1.6 percent) and Slovakia (3.9 percent).⁵ Next, the share of the population aged 20 to 24 that completed at least upper-secondary education is presented in Table 2.2. The latest (2011) EU-27 average for the population aged 20 to 24 is 79.5 percent and has slightly improved (by 2.9 percent) since the year 2000.

⁵ Eurostat. 2012. Adult participation in Lifelong Learning.

Table 2.1: Adult participation in lifelong learning (in percent)

GEO/TIME	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
EU (27 countries)	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	7.1e	7.1e	7.2	8.5b	9.2	9.6	9.5	9.3	9.4	9.3	9.1	8.9
Belgium	2.3	2.7	2.7	2.8	2.9	3.0	4.4	6.9b	6.2i	6.4	6.0	7.0	8.6b	8.3	7.5	7.2	6.8	6.8	7.2	7.1
Bulgaria	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	1.4	1.2	1.3	1.3	1.3	1.3	1.3	1.4	1.4	1.2	1.2
Czech Republic	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	5.6	5.1b	5.8	5.6	5.6i	5.7	7.8	6.8	7.5	11.4b
Denmark	16.2	15.6	15.1	16.8	18.0	18.9	19.8	19.8	19.4b	18.4	18.0	24.2b	25.6	27.4	29.2	29.0	29.9	31.2	32.5	32.3
Germany	:	:	:	:	5.7	5.4	5.3	5.5	5.2	5.2	5.8	6.0i	7.4i	7.7	7.5	7.8	7.9	7.8	7.7	7.8
Estonia	:	:	:	:	:	4.3	6.3	6.5	6.5b	5.4	5.4	6.7	6.4	5.9	6.5	7.0	9.8	10.5	10.9	12.0
Ireland	3.4	3.5	3.9	4.3	4.8	5.2	:	:	:	:	5.5	5.9b	6.1	7.4	7.3	7.6	7.1	6.3	6.7	6.8
Greece	1.2	1.1	1.0	0.9	0.9	0.9	1.0	1.3	1.0	1.2	1.1	2.6b	1.8	1.9	1.9	2.1	2.9	3.3	3.0	2.4
Spain	3.4	3.5	3.9	4.3	4.4	4.4	4.2	5.0	4.5b	4.4	4.4	4.7	4.7	10.5b	10.4	10.4	10.4	10.4	10.8	10.8
France	2.9	3.0	2.9	2.9	2.7	2.9	2.7	2.6	2.8	2.7	2.7	6.8b	6.0	5.9	6.4	6.1	6.0	5.7	5.0	5.5
Italy	3.0	3.3b	3.4	3.8	4.1	4.6	4.8	5.5	4.8b	4.5	4.4	4.5	6.3b	5.8	6.1	6.2	6.3	6.0	6.2	5.7
Cyprus	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	3.0	3.1	3.4	3.7	7.9b	9.3	5.9b	7.1	8.4	8.5	7.8	7.7	7.5
Latvia	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	7.3	7.8	8.4	7.9	6.9	7.1	6.8	5.3	5.0	5.0
Lithuania	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	3.9	2.8	3.5	3.0b	3.8	5.9b	6.0	4.9	5.3	4.9	4.5	4.0	5.9
Luxembourg	2.9	2.6	3.3	2.9	2.9	2.8	5.1b	5.3	4.8	5.3	7.7	6.5b	9.8	8.5	8.2	7.0	8.5	13.4b	13.4	13.6
Hungary	:	:	:	:	:	2.9	3.3	2.9	2.9	2.7	2.9	4.5b	4.0	3.9	3.8	3.6	3.1	2.7	2.8	2.7
Malta	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	4.5	4.6	4.4	4.2	4.3b	5.3	5.4	6.0	6.3	6.1	6.2	6.6
Netherlands	15.1	14.3	13.6	13.1	12.5	12.6	12.9	13.6	15.5	15.9	15.8	16.4b	16.4	15.9	15.6	16.6	17.0	17.0	16.6b	16.7
Austria	:	:	:	7.7	7.9	7.8	:	9.1	8.3	8.2	7.5	8.6b	11.6i	12.9	13.1	12.8	13.2	13.8	13.7	13.4
Poland	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	4.3	4.2	4.4	5.0b	4.9	4.7	5.1	4.7	4.7	5.3	4.5
Portugal	3.6	3.2	3.5	3.3	3.4	3.5	3.1b	3.4	3.4	3.3	2.9	3.2	4.3b	4.1	4.2	4.4	5.3	6.5	5.8	11.6b
Romania	:	:	:	:	:	0.9	1.0	0.8	0.9	1.0	1.0	1.1	1.5b	1.6	1.3	1.3	1.5	1.5	1.3	1.6
Slovenia	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	7.3	8.4	13.3b	16.2	15.3	15.0	14.8	13.9	14.6	16.2	15.9
Slovakia	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	8.5	3.7b	4.3	4.6	4.1	3.9	3.3	2.8	2.8	3.9
Finland	:	:	:	:	16.3	15.8	16.1	17.6	17.5b	17.2	17.3	22.4b	22.8	22.5	23.1	23.4	23.1	22.1	23.0	23.8
Sweden	:	:	:	:	26.5	25.0	:	25.8	21.6	17.5b	18.4	:	:	17.4p	18.4p	18.6p	22.2b	22.2p	24.5	25.0
United Kingdom	12.5	10.8	11.5	:	:	:	:	19.2	20.5b	20.9	21.3	27.2b	29.0	27.6	26.7	20.0b	19.9	20.1	19.4	15.8p
Iceland	:	:	:	14.1	15.7	16.5	19.3	20.2	23.5	23.5	24.0	29.5b	24.2	25.7	27.9	27.0	25.1	25.1	25.2	25.9
Liechtenstein	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:
Norway	:	:	:	:	16.5	16.4	:	:	13.3	14.2	13.3	17.1b	17.4	17.8	18.7	18.0	19.3	18.1	17.8	18.2
Switzerland	:	:	:	:	29.5	29.8	33.3	31.1	34.7	37.3	35.8	24.7b	28.6	27.0	22.5i	26.8	27.9	23.9i	30.6	29.9
Montenegro	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:
Croatia	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	1.9	1.8	1.9	2.1	2.9	2.4	2.2	2.3	2.2	2.3
Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, the	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	2.3	2.8	2.5	3.3	3.2	3.4
Turkey	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	1.8	1.5	1.9	2.3	2.5	2.9

:=not available e=estimated b=break in series i=see metadata p=provisional u=unreliable

Source: Eurostat. 2012. Labour force study. Adult participation in Lifelong Learning.

2. Socio-demographic Characteristics of VET Learners in the 7EU Countries

Table 2.2: Percentage of youth education attainment level, by country

GEO/TIME	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
European Union (27 countries)	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	76.6	76.6	76.7	77.1	77.3	77.5	77.9	78.1	78.4	78.6	79.0	79.5
Belgium	74.4	74.8	76.3	77.6	80.2	80.1	79.6	76.2i	81.7b	81.7	81.6	81.2	81.8	81.8	82.4	82.6	82.2	83.3	82.5	81.6
Bulgaria	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	75.2	78.1b	77.4	76.3	76.1	76.5	80.5i	83.3	83.7	83.7	84.4	85.5
Czech Republic	:	:	:	:	:	:	92.2	91.8	91.2	90.6	92.2	92.1	91.4	91.2	91.8	91.8	91.6	91.9	91.9	91.7
Denmark	78.7	87.5	84.9	89.3	74.6b	73.6	76.3	73.2	72.0	78.4i	78.6	76.2b	76.2	77.1	77.4	69.4b	68.9	69.9	68.6	70.0
Germany	82.4	81.3	82.8	79.4	74.9b	74.8	:	74.6	74.7	73.6	73.3	72.5	72.8	71.4b	71.9	72.9	74.1	73.7	74.4	75.8
Estonia	:	:	:	:	:	:	83.1	83.0	79.0b	79.8	81.4	81.5	80.3	82.6	82.0	80.9	82.2	82.3	83.2	82.6
Ireland	67.5	71.8	72.2	73.8	77.3	77.4	:	82.0	82.6	83.9	84.0	85.1	85.3	85.8	85.8	86.8	87.7	86.4	86.5	86.9
Greece	71.2	70.9	71.4	73.8	75.3	76.8	76.4	78.6	79.2	80.2	81.1	81.7	83.0	84.1	81.0	82.1	82.1	82.2	83.4	83.6
Spain	52.7	55.4	56.1	59.0	61.5	63.7	64.6i	65.2i	66.0	65.0	63.7	62.2	61.2	61.8	61.6	61.1	60.0	59.9	61.2	61.7
France	:	76.6	77.5	78.6	75.2	76.3	78.9	80.0	81.6	81.8	81.7	82.8b	83.0	83.4	83.3	82.4	83.8	83.6	83.2	83.8
Italy	55.1	54.7b	56.3	58.9	60.9	62.4	65.3	66.3	69.4b	67.9	69.6	71.0	73.4	73.6	75.5	76.3	76.5	76.3	76.3	76.9
Cyprus	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	80.8	79.0	80.5	83.5	79.5	77.6	80.4	83.7	85.8	85.1	87.4	86.3	87.7
Latvia	:	:	:	:	:	:	78.5	74.6b	76.5	71.7i	77.1b	75.4	79.5	79.8	81.0	80.2	80.0	80.5	79.9	80.4
Lithuania	:	:	:	:	:	:	83.2	81.3	78.9i	80.5	81.3b	84.2	85.0	87.8	88.2	89.0	89.1	86.9	86.9	86.9
Luxembourg	45.6	52.8	54.0	51.9	49.5	53.1	:	71.2b	77.5	68.0	69.8	72.7b	72.5	71.1	69.3	70.9	72.8	76.8b	73.4	73.3
Hungary	:	:	:	:	:	77.7	81.5	85.2	83.5	84.7	85.9	84.7b	83.5	83.4	82.9	84.0	83.6	84.0	84.0	83.3
Malta	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	40.9	40.1	39.0	45.1b	51.0	53.7	51.1	55.5	51.1	53.3	53.3	59.2
Netherlands	:	:	:	:	67.6	70.3	72.9	72.3	71.9	72.7	73.1	75.0	75.0	75.6	74.7	76.2	76.2	76.6	77.6b	78.2
Austria	:	:	:	79.2	80.5	81.8	84.4	84.7	85.1b	85.1	85.3	84.2	85.8i	85.9	85.8	84.1	84.5	86.0	85.6	85.4
Poland	:	:	:	:	:	85.1	84.5	81.6i	88.8b	89.7	89.2	90.3	90.9	91.1	91.7	91.6	91.3	91.3	91.1	90.0
Portugal	35.0	37.8	41.3	45.1	46.2	47.1	39.3b	40.1	43.2	44.4	44.4	47.9	49.6	49.0	49.6	53.4	54.3	55.5	58.7	64.4i
Romania	:	:	:	:	:	82.0	81.0	77.8	76.1	77.3	76.3	75.0	75.3	76.0	77.2	77.4	78.3	78.3	78.2	79.6
Slovenia	:	:	:	:	84.4	85.7	86.8	85.8	88.0b	88.2	90.7	90.8	90.5	90.5	89.4	91.5	90.2	89.4	89.1	90.1
Slovakia	:	:	:	:	:	:	93.4	93.3	94.8	94.4	94.5	94.1	91.7	91.8	91.5	91.3	92.3	93.3	93.2	93.3
Finland	:	:	:	82.4	81.9	85.9	85.2	86.8	87.7b	86.1	85.8	85.3	84.5	83.4	84.7	86.5	86.2	85.1	84.2	85.4
Sweden	:	:	:	88.1	86.3	86.6	87.5	86.3	85.2	85.5b	86.7	85.8	86.0	87.5p	84.9p	85.5p	85.6p	86.4p	85.9p	88.7p
United Kingdom	57.1	57.8	61.0	64.0	62.2	65.8	:	75.3b	76.7	76.9	77.1	78.6	77.0	78.1	78.8	78.1	78.2	79.3	80.4	80.1
Iceland	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	43.8	46.1	46.1	48.5	51.2	51.7	50.8	49.3	52.9	53.6	53.6	53.4	56.9
Norway	:	:	:	:	90.1	92.9	93.4	94.4	95.0	96.2	94.8	93.7	95.1	96.2	68.6b	67.9	70.1	69.7	71.1	71.2
Switzerland	:	:	:	:	83.7	81.0	77.0	76.0	77.7	80.4	79.4	77.5	78.7	78.3	78.1	81.2	82.6	79.0	82.3	83.0
Croatia	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	90.6	91.0	93.5	93.8	94.6	95.3	95.4	95.2	95.7	95.6
Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, the	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	75.8	79.2	79.7	81.9	82.8	85.3
Turkey	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	46.0	47.7	48.9	50.0	51.1	52.6

:=not available b=break in series i=see metadata p=provisional

Source: Eurostat. 2012. Youth education attainment level by gender; Youth attainment level - percentage of the population aged 20 - 24 having completed at least upper-secondary education.

Amongst the countries included in the 7EU-VET study, attainment rates are highest in Slovenia (90.1 percent), Lithuania (86.9 percent) and Austria (85.4 percent). Due to the specifics of its VET education, Germany has the lowest completion rate (75.8 percent), followed by the United Kingdom (80.1 percent) and Latvia (80.4 percent). The latter two countries are closest to the EU-27 average, while Lithuania, Austria and especially Slovenia are above-average.

Slovenia can be included in the group of countries with the highest attainment rates, together with Czech Republic (91.7 percent), Poland (90 percent) and Slovakia (93.3 percent). The averages are also quite high for Lithuania and Austria and can mainly be compared with Bulgaria (85.5 percent), Ireland (86.9 percent) and Finland (85.4 percent). The performances of the United Kingdom and Latvia seem similar to Belgium (81.6 percent), Estonia (82.6 percent), the Netherlands (78.2 percent) as well as Romania (79.6 percent). Germany's result is comparable, e.g. to Italy (76.9 percent) and Luxembourg (73.3 percent).⁶ Further, Table 2.3 presents the participation of pupils in general and vocational education for 2010.

As Table 2.3 shows, the average in the EU-27 shows almost equal proportions among students enrolled in vocational programmes and general programmes (49.9 percent versus 51.9 percent). However, the EU average masks significant differences among the countries. Germany comes closest to the average with 51.5 percent of pupils enrolled in vocational programmes, together with Bulgaria (52.2 percent), Malta (49.3 percent), Denmark (46.5 percent), Poland (48.2 percent) and Sweden (56.1 percent). The share of pupils enrolled in vocational programmes is (for 7-EU VET countries) the highest in Austria (76.8 percent), that has, together with Belgium (73 percent), Czech Republic (73.1 percent), Slovakia (71.3 percent) and Liechtenstein (80.3 percent), one of the highest overall participations in VET. In Slovenia (64.6 percent) participation is above the EU average, and its participation is comparable to Italy (60 percent), Luxembourg (61.3 percent), the Netherlands (67 percent) and Romania (63.8 percent).

⁶ Eurostat. 2012. Youth education attainment level by gender; Youth attainment level – percentage of the population aged 20–24 having completed at least upper secondary education.

Table 2.3: Students participating in general and vocational education, by country (in percent)

GEO/TIME	Students at ISCED level 3- General orientation - as % of all students at ISCED level 3	Students at ISCED level 3- Vocational orientation - as % of all students at ISCED level 3	Students at ISCED level 4- Vocational orientation - as % of all students at ISCED level 4
	2010	2010	2010
	European Union (27 countries)	50.1	49.9
Belgium	27.0	73.0	99.3
Bulgaria	47.8	52.2	100.0
Czech Republic	26.9	73.1	63.5
Denmark	53.5	46.5	0.0
Germany (including former GDR from 1991)	48.5	51.5	74.0
Estonia	65.8	34.2	100.0
Ireland	62.5	37.5	100.0
Greece	69.3	30.7	100.0
Spain	55.4	44.6	:
France	55.7	44.3	61.6
Italy	40.0	60.0	100.0
Cyprus	86.8	13.2	:
Latvia	64.0	36.0	100.0
Lithuania	72.3	27.7	100.0
Luxembourg	38.7	61.3	100.0
Hungary	74.2	25.8	100.0
Malta	50.7	49.3	85.6
Netherlands	33.0	67.0	100.0
Austria	23.2	76.8	100.0
Poland	51.8	48.2	100.0
Portugal	61.2	38.8	100.0
Romania	36.2	63.8	100.0
Slovenia	35.4	64.6	38.8
Slovakia	28.7	71.3	100.0
Finland	30.3	69.7	100.0
Sweden	43.9	56.1	84.3
United Kingdom	67.9	32.1	0.0
Iceland	65.7	34.3	100.0
Liechtenstein	19.7	80.3	0.0
Norway	46.1	53.9	88.0
Switzerland	33.8	66.2	38.4
Croatia	27.9	72.1	:
Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, the	40.0	60.0	100.0
Turkey	57.1	42.9	:
Albania	:	:	:
United States	:	:	100.0
Japan	76.5	23.5	:

Notes: Data for Luxembourg refer to 2009. Data for EU-27 are estimated

: =Not available e=Estimated value b=Break in series i=See explanatory text p=Provisional value u=Unreliable or uncertain data

Source: Eurostat. 2012. Participation in general and vocational education.

The proportion of students who were enrolled in vocational programmes at the upper-secondary level of education (ISCED level 3) is lower especially in Lithuania with just 27.7 percent of pupils. Together with Hungary (25.8 percent) and Cyprus (13.2 percent), these are the three countries with the lowest share of students enrolled in vocational programmes. A low participation rate is also seen in Greece (30.7 percent), Latvia (36 percent) and the UK (32.1 percent). Participation is similar to Estonia (34.2 percent), Ireland (37.5 percent) and Portugal (38.8 percent).⁷

Following the Eurostat data, trends in VET enrolments vary across the countries included in the 7EU VET survey. In Germany, there were 554,608 graduates in the year 2000 and the number of graduates was slowly increasing during the period 2000-2006 (596,549 graduates) when it dropped sharply to just 565,770 graduates. Over the period 2006-2010 the numbers were still dropping, arriving at only 456,017 in 2010. The pattern seems similar in Greece where there were 36,568 graduates in the year 2000. Over the period 2002-2005 (48,853) the numbers were slowly increasing, reaching their peak in 2003 (50,317). After 2005, the number of graduates dropped sharply to 33,382 in 2008. There are no data available for 2009-2010.

In the period 2000-2005, the number of graduates of vocational upper-secondary education was slowly dropping (from 9,292 to 7,427) in Latvia, however the numbers increased in 2006 (8,140). There were 7,682 graduates in 2010. In Lithuania, 9,354 pupils graduated in 2000 compared to only 6,883 in 2005 and 6,616 in 2006. However, in 2007 there was gradual growth leading to 7,847 graduates in 2010. There are no obvious differences over the period 2001-2006 in Austria, although the number of graduates increased in 2007 (49,024 in 2006 to 55,158 in 2007) and even more in 2010 (58,936). In Slovenia, the number of graduates was slowly dropping over the period 2000-2010. There were 24,396 graduates in 2000 and the numbers were dropping year by year to only amount to 15,232 in 2010. There are no data available for the UK.⁸ In addition to the general trends, it is important to consider the percentage of school dropouts.

⁷ Eurostat. 2012. Participation in general and vocational education.

⁸ Eurostat. 2012. Upper secondary education – level 3 – vocational programmes (ISCED 1997).

2. Socio-demographic Characteristics of VET Learners in the 7EU Countries

Table 2.4: Percentage of the population (aged 18 to 24) with at most lower-secondary education without further education or training, by country

GEO/TIME	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
EU (27 countries)	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	17.6e	17.2e	17.0	16.5b	16.0	15.8	15.5	15.1	14.9	14.4	14.1	13.5
Belgium	18.1	17.4	16.1	15.1	12.9	12.7	14.5	15.2b	13.8	13.8	14.1	14.3	13.1b	12.9	12.6	12.1	12.0	11.1	11.9	12.3
Bulgaria	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	20.5	20.7	21.9	21.4	20.4	17.3	14.9	14.8	14.7	13.9	12.8
Czech Republic	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	5.7	6.5 b	6.3	6.2	5.1	5.2	5.6	5.4	4.9	4.9
Denmark	15.2	8.5	8.6	6.1	12.1b	10.7	9.8	11.5	11.7	9.2	9.0	10.4b	8.8	8.7	9.1	12.9b	12.5	11.3	11.0	9.6
Germany	:	:	:	:	13.3	12.9	:	14.9	14.6	12.3	12.5	12.8i	12.1	13.5b	13.7	12.5	11.8	11.1	11.9	11.5
Estonia	:	:	:	:	:	:	12.6	14.0	15.1	14.4	13.2	12.9	13.1	13.4	13.5	14.4	14.0	13.9	11.6	10.9
Ireland	27.1	24.0	22.9	21.4	18.9	18.9	:	:	:	:	14.6	13.1b	13.1	12.5	12.1	11.6	11.3	11.6	11.4	10.6
Greece	25.2	25.0	23.2	22.4	20.7	19.9	20.7	18.6	18.2	17.1	16.5	16.0b	14.7	13.6	15.5	14.6	14.8	14.5	13.7	13.1
Spain	40.4	37.7	36.4	33.8	31.4	30.0	29.6	29.5	29.1	29.7	30.7	31.6	32.0	30.8b	30.5	31.0	31.9	31.2	28.4	26.5
France	:	17.2	16.4	15.4	15.2	14.1	14.9	14.7	13.3	13.5	13.4	12.4b	12.1	12.2	12.4	12.6	11.5	12.2	12.6	12.0
Italy	37.5	37.1b	35.1	32.8	31.7	30.1	28.4	27.2	25.1	25.9	24.2	23.0	22.3	22.0	20.6	19.7	19.7	19.2	18.8	18.2
Cyprus	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	17.5	18.5	17.9	15.9	17.3b	20.6	18.2b	14.9	12.5	13.7	11.7	12.6	11.2
Latvia	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	16.9	18.0	14.7	14.4	14.8	15.1	15.5	13.9	13.3	11.8
Lithuania	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	16.5	14.9b	13.4b	11.4	10.5b	8.1	8.2	7.4	7.4	8.7	8.1	7.9
Luxembourg	42.2	36.8	34.4	33.4	35.3	30.7	:	19.1b	16.8	18.1	17.0	12.3b	12.7	13.3	14.0	12.5	13.4	7.7 b	7.1 u	6.2 u
Hungary	:	:	:	:	:	17.8	15.9	13.0	13.9	13.1	12.2	12.0b	12.6	12.5	12.6	11.4	11.7	11.2	10.5	11.2
Malta	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	54.2	54.4	53.2	49.9	42.1b	38.9	39.9	38.3	38.1	36.8	36.9	33.5
Netherlands	:	:	:	:	17.6	16.0	15.5	16.2	15.4	15.1	15.3	14.3b	14.1	13.5	12.6	11.7	11.4	10.9	10.0b	9.1
Austria	:	:	:	13.6	12.1	10.8	:	10.7	10.2	10.2	9.5	9.0 b	9.5 i	9.1	9.8	10.7	10.1	8.7	8.3	8.3
Poland	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	7.4	7.2	6.0	5.6 b	5.3	5.4	5.0	5.0	5.3	5.4	5.6
Portugal	50.0	46.7	44.3	41.4	40.1	40.6	46.6b	44.9	43.6	44.2	45.0	41.2	39.4b	38.8	39.1	36.9	35.4	31.2	28.7	23.2i
Romania	:	:	:	:	:	19.7	19.1	21.5	22.9	21.7	23.0	22.5	22.4b	19.6	17.9	17.3	15.9	16.6	18.4	17.5
Slovenia	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	6.4	5.1	4.6 u	4.3 u	4.9 u	5.6	4.1 u	5.1 u	5.3 u	5.0 u	4.2 u
Slovakia	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	6.7	5.3 b	6.8	6.3	6.6	6.5	6.0	4.9	4.7	5.0
Finland	:	:	:	:	11.1	8.1	7.9	9.9	9.0 b	9.5	9.7	10.1b	10.0	10.3	9.7	9.1	9.8	9.9	10.3i	9.8
Sweden	:	:	:	:	7.5	6.8	:	6.9	7.3	10.2b	10.0i	9.2 p	9.2 p	10.8p	13.0p	12.2p	12.2p	10.7p	9.7 p	6.6 p
United Kingdom	34.7	36.3	32.3	:	:	:	:	19.8b	18.2	17.8	17.6	:	12.1	11.6	11.3	16.6b	17.0	15.7	14.9	15.0
Iceland	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	30.3	29.8	30.9	28.8	20.3b	24.9	24.9	25.6	23.2	24.4	21.3	22.6	19.7
Liechtenstein	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:
Norway	:	:	:	:	10.9	7.3	:	:	12.9	8.9	13.5	6.3 b	4.7	4.6	17.8b	18.4	17.0	17.6	17.4	16.6
Switzerland	:	:	:	:	6.1	6.5	4.9	5.0	7.3	6.6	6.7	9.7 b	9.5	9.7	9.6 i	7.6	7.7	9.1 i	6.6	6.3
Montenegro	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:
Croatia	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	8.0	7.9	5.4	5.1 u	4.7 u	3.9 u	3.7 u	3.9 u	3.7 u	4.1 u
Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, the	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	22.8	19.9	19.6	16.2	15.5	13.5
Turkey	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	48.8	46.9	45.5	44.3	43.1	41.9

Source: Eurostat. 2012. Upper-secondary education - level 3 - vocational programmes (ISCED 1997).

As seen in Table 2.4, the percentage of the population aged 18 to 24 with at most lower-secondary education without further education or training. The EU-27 average for 2011 is 13.5 percent and it has gradually dropped since the year 2000 (17.6 percent). There are large differences between the countries included in the 7EU VET study, however all of them except for the UK are below the EU-27 average or around the average. The most promising result is shown by Slovenia with only 4.2 percent of early school leavers, however the data for Slovenia are possibly unreliable or uncertain. The share is also low in Austria (8.3 percent) and Lithuania (7.9 percent) and can be compared to northern countries Denmark (9.6 percent), Finland (9.8 percent) and the Netherlands (9.1 percent).

The results for Germany (11.5 percent) and Latvia (11.8 percent) appear to be a little below-average and can be compared to Estonia (10.9 percent), Ireland (10.6 percent), Cyprus (11.2 percent) and Hungary (11.2 percent). Greece (13.1 percent) falls around the EU-27 average together with Bulgaria (12.8 percent), Belgium (12.3 percent) and France (12.0). The United Kingdom has the biggest share of early school leavers (15 percent) and can be included in a group together with Romania (17.5 percent).⁹

At this point, we turn our attention to the countries surveyed in the 7EU-VET project, and 17- and 18-year-old VET students. We make a country comparison based on gender, place of living in terms of population density, country of origin, parents' education, and programme structures.

2.2 Place of living and country of origin

The studied countries are also highly characterised by place of living in terms of population density. In Germany and Slovenia, the ratio between students coming from a city and those from a country village or farm is almost 1:1. In Austria there are more (60 percent) of those students from the countryside, while in the other countries most (on average 76 percent) students are from cities with the highest percentage in the UK at 89 percent.

Table 2.5: Settlement of students, by country (in percent)

	Austria	Germany	Greece	Latvia	Lithuania	Slovenia	UK (England)
City	40	52	80	68	70	45	89
Country village or farm	60	48	20	32	30	55	11

Question: G7 Which phrase below best describes the area where you live?

In all 7EU VET countries, most (96 percent) students were born in the country where they study, with the lowest percentage in Greece at 84 percent.¹ Similarly, when looking at parents' birth place, most of

⁹ Eurostat. 2012. Early leavers from education and training.

them (96 percent) were born in the country where their children study, with again the lowest percentage in Greece, again at 84 percent.

Table 2.6: Students' place of birth, by country (in percent)

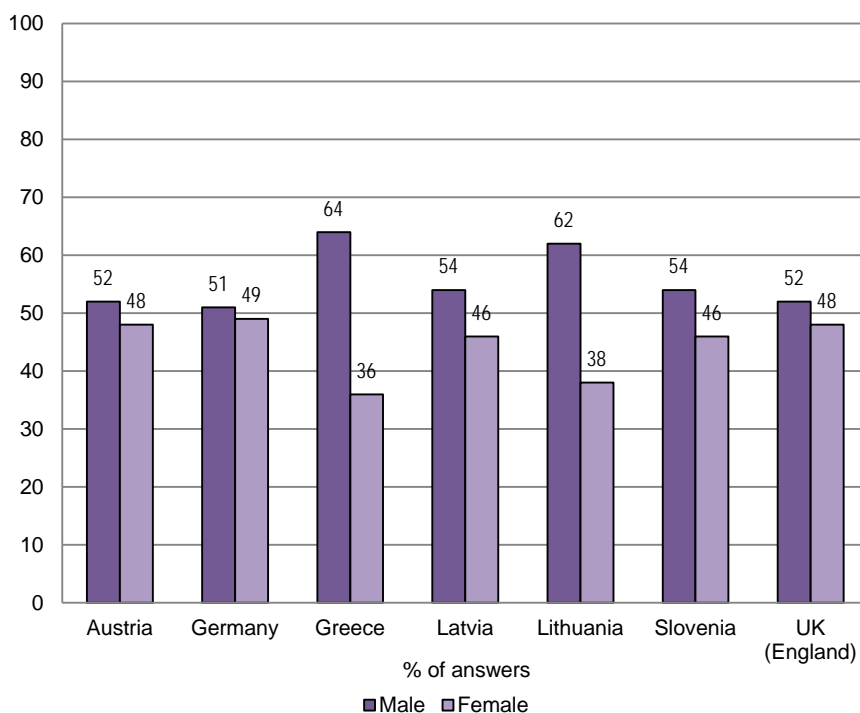
	Austria	Germany	Greece	Latvia	Lithuania	Slovenia	UK (England)
In own country	96	96	84	99	98	96	95
In other country	4	4	16	1	2	4	5

Question: G3a Where were you born?

2.3 Gender and programme sector orientation

When we look at gender distribution in VET, we can note that according to our data there is a slightly higher percentage of male students in all 7EU VET countries, with the highest share in Greece (64 percent) and Lithuania (62 percent), while in the other five countries the ratios of male and female students are very similar with differences of just a few percent (2-8 percent).

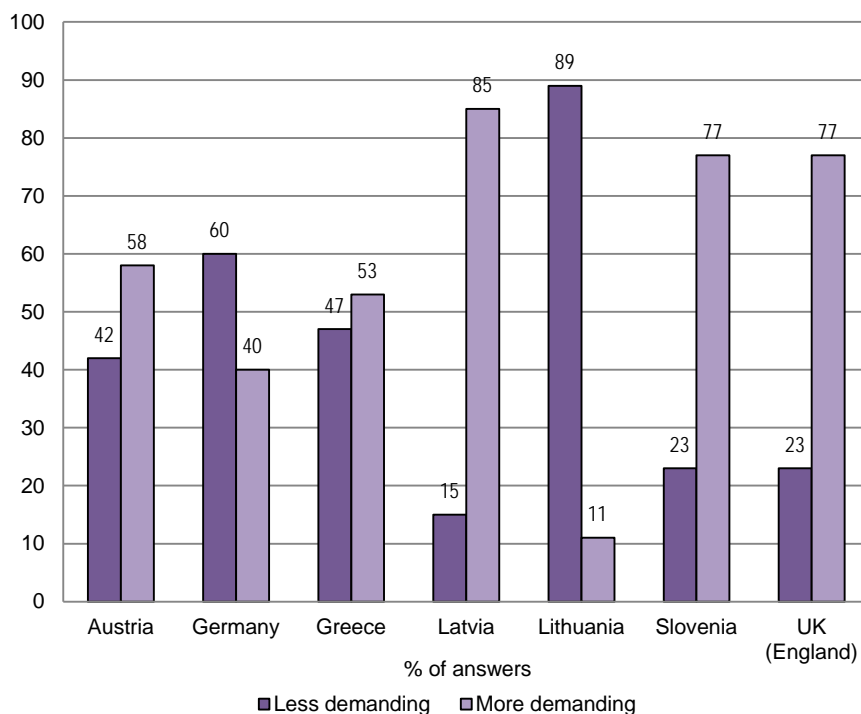
Chart 2.1: Students' gender distribution, by country (in percent)



Question: G1 Are you male or female?

In the UK, Slovenia, Latvia, Greece and Austria there are more students enrolled in more demanding programmes¹⁰, while in Germany and Lithuania the situation is reversed. In Lithuania, 89 percent of students are enrolled in less demanding programmes while, on the other side, 85 percent of students go to more demanding programmes in Latvia, which makes for an interesting comparison between these two neighbouring countries.

Chart 2.2: Type of programme students are enrolled in, by country (in percent)



Question: B1 What type of school/programme are you enrolled in? and B2b What is the total duration of this programme?

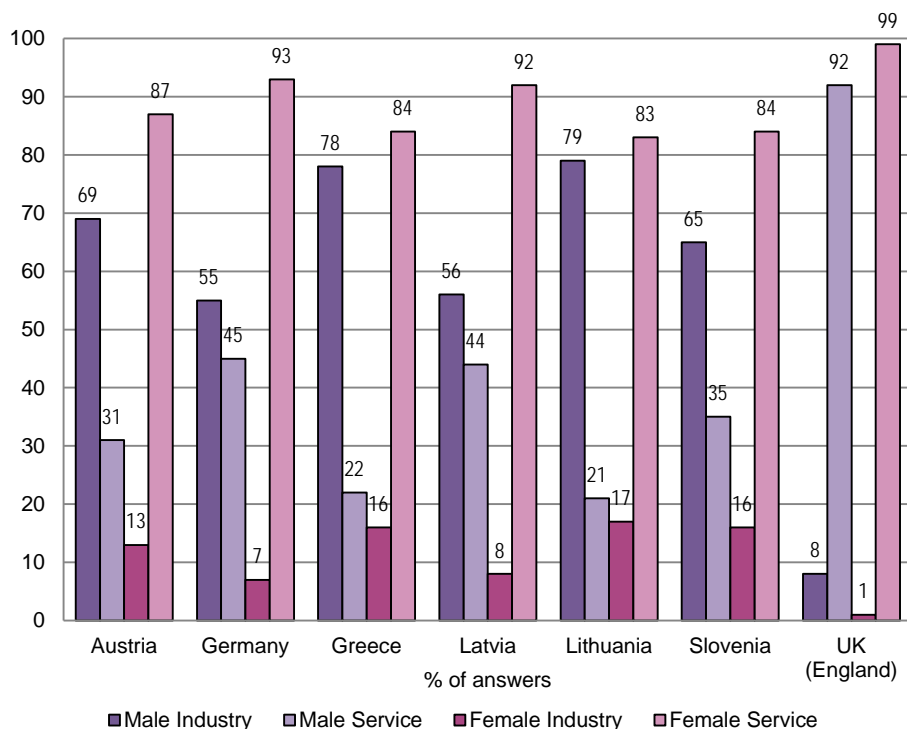
In general, across all the countries there are more students enrolled in service programmes than in industry ones (the proportion is 2:3). However, industry sector programmes compared to service sector ones are more popular in Greece and Lithuania (56 percent), while there are bigger shares of students in the service sector programmes in the other four countries with the UK at the extreme with 95 percent of surveyed students being enrolled in service programmes.ⁱⁱ

To better understand the demographics in VET programmes, we also reviewed the gender distribution differences between sectors, industry and service. Also here we obtained the expected results, a very high percentage of female students in service programmes (above 83 percent) with Germany and Latvia

¹⁰ See Appendix 2 for a detailed elaboration.

above 92 percent, and the UK with 99 percent of female students. In the industry sector, we can note a higher percentage of male students (55 percent), with Greece and Lithuania having the highest percentages among the 7EU-VET countries (approximately 78 percent).

Chart 2.3: Percentage of gender distribution between industry and service, by country



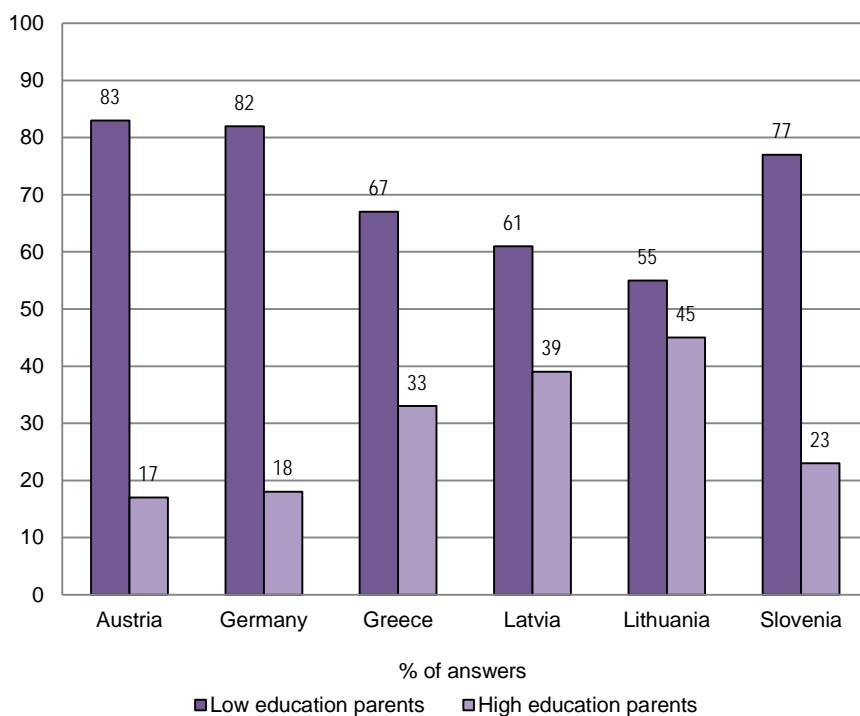
Question: B2a What is the title of the programme you are enrolled in?

2.4 Parents' education and socio-economic status

When looking at parents' education we find there are higher percentages of students with lowly educated parents¹¹. The biggest differences are seen in Austria and Germany (82 percent of students with lowly educated parents) and the smallest in Lithuania (55 percent).

¹¹ High educated parents: one or both parents have ISCED 5A/5B/6 education; if both of parents had less than ISCED 5A they were defined as low educated.

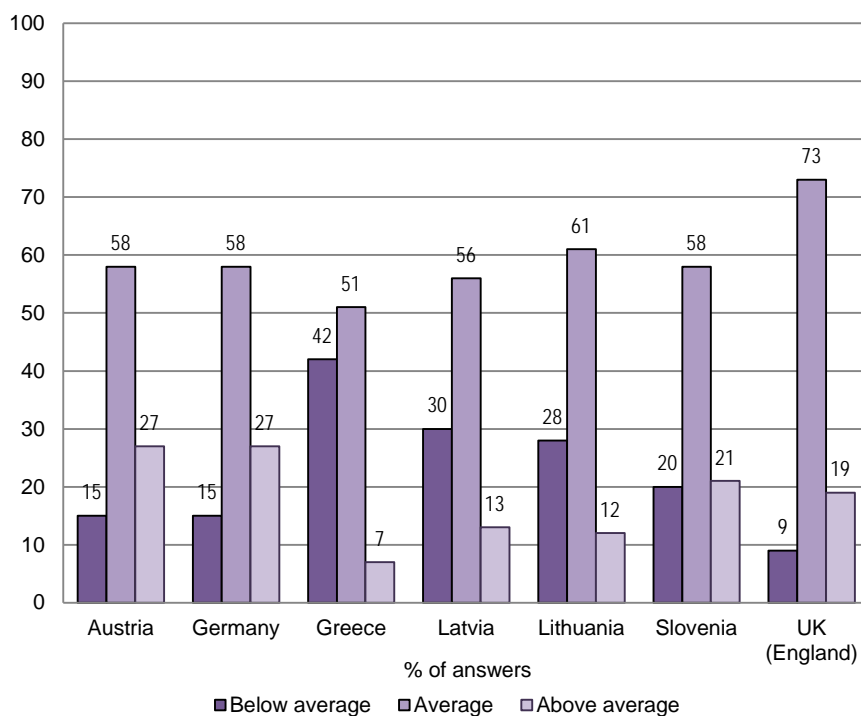
Chart 2.4: Parents' level of schooling, by country (in percent)



Question: G8 What is the 'highest level of schooling' completed by your father/mother?

In all seven countries, the majority (59 percent) of students come from families with an average socio-economic status with the highest rate in the UK, at 73 percent. In Austria (27 percent), Germany (27 percent) and the UK (19 percent) there are more students with an above-average socio-economic status than those from families with a below-average status, while in Greece and the two Baltic countries we can note the reverse situation. In Slovenia these two groups are equally represented (20 percent).

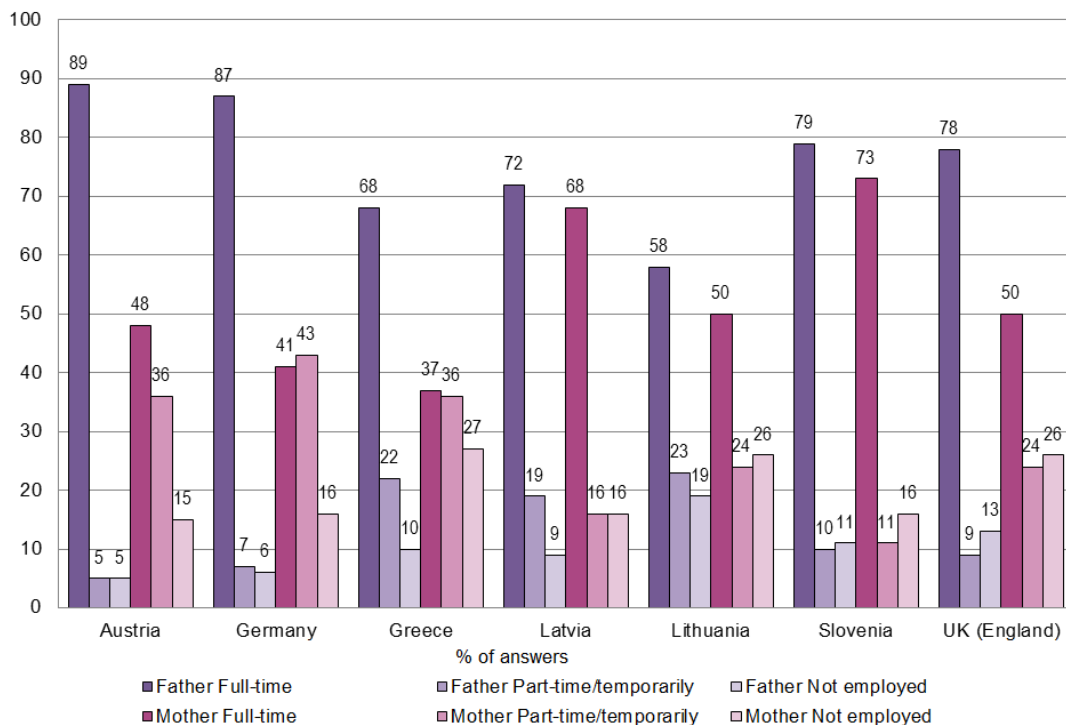
Chart 2.5: Level of family's income, by country (in percent)



Question: G14 Which of the descriptions below comes closest to how you feel about your family's income?

If we take a look at parents' employment status, we find that in all seven countries the majority of both parents are employed full-time. Across all the countries most fathers have a full-time job, with the lowest share in Lithuania (58 percent) and the highest in Austria and Germany (88 percent). In Latvia, Greece and Lithuania around 20 percent of students' fathers have part-time or temporary employment. With students' mothers' employment status it is a little different, there is a smaller share of those with full-time employment and a bigger share of those that are part-time employed or unemployed. Only around 50 percent of mothers across the seven countries have a full-time job, with the highest percentages in Slovenia (73 percent) and Latvia (68 percent) and the lowest in Greece (37 percent). Around 16 percent of mothers are unemployed, with the highest percentages in Greece, Lithuania and the UK (26 percent). In Lithuania, we can also note the highest rate of unemployed fathers (19 percent). There are no larger differences (no more than 10 percent) in the social-economic status of families among those where both parents were born in the country and those where one parent was born in another country.ⁱⁱⁱ

Chart 2.6: Parents' employment status, by country (in percent)



Question: G9 What is the employment status of your parents?

If we compare employment status in relation to the socio-economic status of the students' parents, we find that in all seven countries among parents with an average and above-average socio-economic status there are slightly bigger shares of full-time employed mothers and fathers and slightly smaller shares of parents without employment than among those with a below-average socio-economic status^{iv}. From the comparison of parents' employment status based on their education we can note that parents with a high education slightly more often have full-time employment and are slightly less often unemployed than those with a low education. These relations are more evident in Lithuania, Latvia and Greece^v.

2.5 Conclusions and starting points

In the next sections of this chapter we explore in a country comparative fashion the survey results related to the following six different subject areas:

- the transition from earlier education to VET, where in particular we streamline the results towards exploring the determinants of the breadth of vocational choice;

- learning, perception and satisfaction with VET programmes. In this section we explore what drives VET students' learning habits in school and in their free time, how they perceive VET curricula and which factors determine satisfaction with school success, which is a strong indicator of student learning and career motivation;
- school success and acquired competencies. This section starts by exploring the determinants of school success. Further on in the section, we explore what impacts the perception of the ability to perform occupational tasks independently and team work. We end by looking at the link between school success and the impact of VET programmes on six generic competencies;
- information and communication technology. This section studies the characteristics of the VET programmes in the seven studied countries according to all break variables; and
- future career aspirations and further education. In this part, we look at which aspects make major differences with regard to future career aspiration, and what affects the motivation for further education.

All five sections of the chapter compare results on the country level, however within each country we consider similarities and differences in relation to gender, parents' education, socio-economic status, programme type and orientation, and school success (grades).

3 THE TRANSITION FROM EARLIER EDUCATION TO VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING

This chapter addresses questions related to the transition from earlier education to vocational education and training. First, the context of the decision-making process which is related to the question of the general status of VET programmes in particular countries is considered. Second, the chapter explores which personal and external factors affected the personal decision to enrol in VET programmes. Third, it explains how VET students judge the importance of different information sources in their decision-making process. Lastly, it compares how broad the relative choice of VET students is across the countries. Following the book's overall logic, the comparative aspects include, in addition to countries, relevant socio-demographic factors.

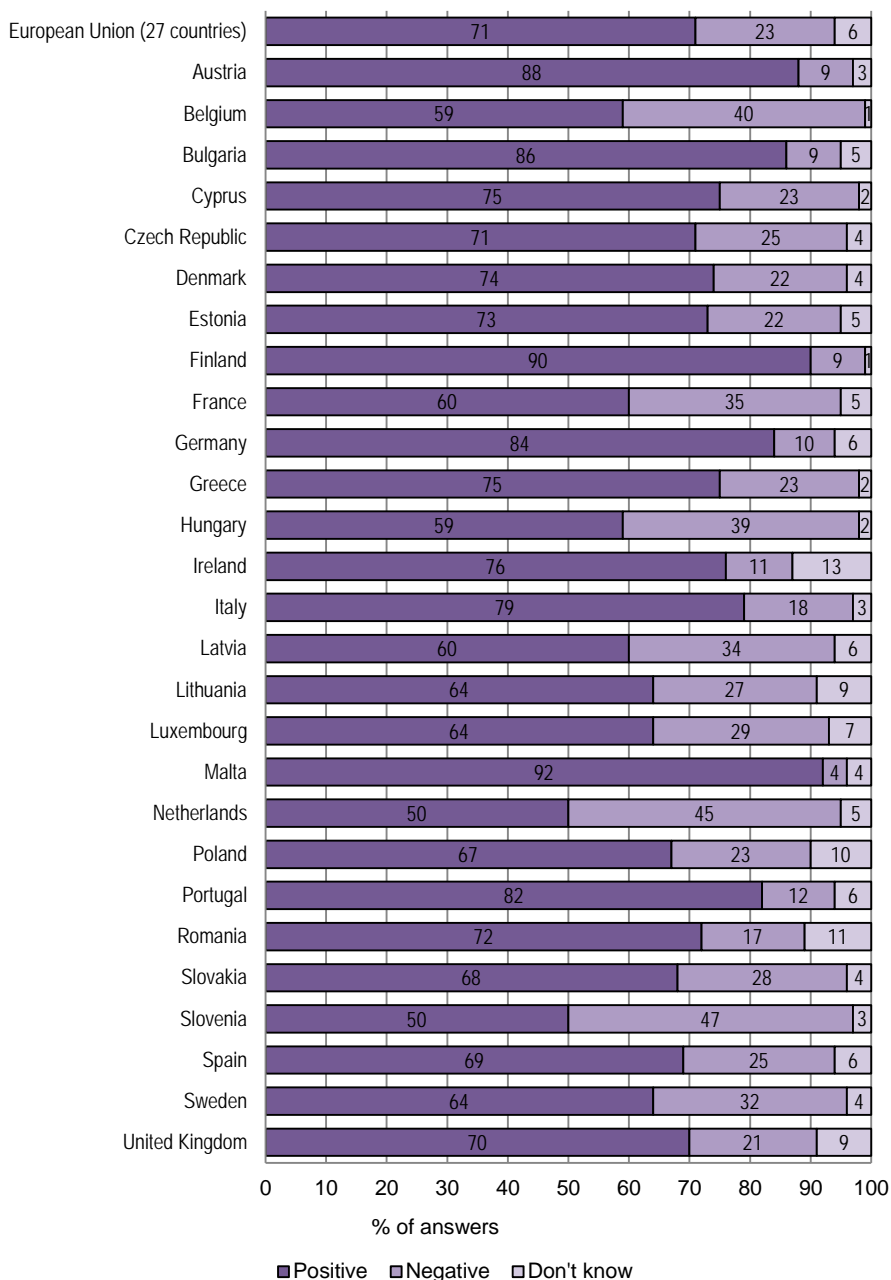
3.1 Perceived status of Vocational Education and Training in the EU-27 countries

In the decision-making process, it is important to consider the general status of VET in each country under observation. Despite the general trend of decreasing enrolments in VET, most European citizens believe that vocational education and training has a positive image. 71 percent of citizens see its image as fairly positive or very positive. However, there are considerable differences among the countries included in the 7EU VET study.

As Chart 3.1 shows, citizens in Austria (88 percent) and Germany (84 percent) show the highest level of approval, while those from Latvia (60 percent) and especially Slovenia (50 percent) show the lowest level. Austria and Germany therefore belong to the group of countries with the highest reputation of vocational education and training, together with Malta (92 percent) and Finland (90 percent). The reputation is also above-average in Greece (75 percent) and is comparable to Ireland (76 percent) or Denmark (74 percent). The UK comes closest to the average with 70 percent of citizens that see the image of VET programmes as positive, together with the Czech Republic (71 percent), Spain (70 percent) and Slovakia (69 percent). Their reputation in Lithuania (64 percent) and Latvia (60 percent) is similar in Sweden (64 percent) and Luxembourg (64 percent). In Slovenia, only every second person believes that VET has a positive image and it is the country with the lowest level of approval together with the Netherlands (50 percent). (Special Eurobarometer 369, 2011: 22) A similar question concerns the extent to which VET contributes to economic aims. The results about this are presented in Chart 3.2.

3. The Transition from Earlier Education to Vocational Education and Training

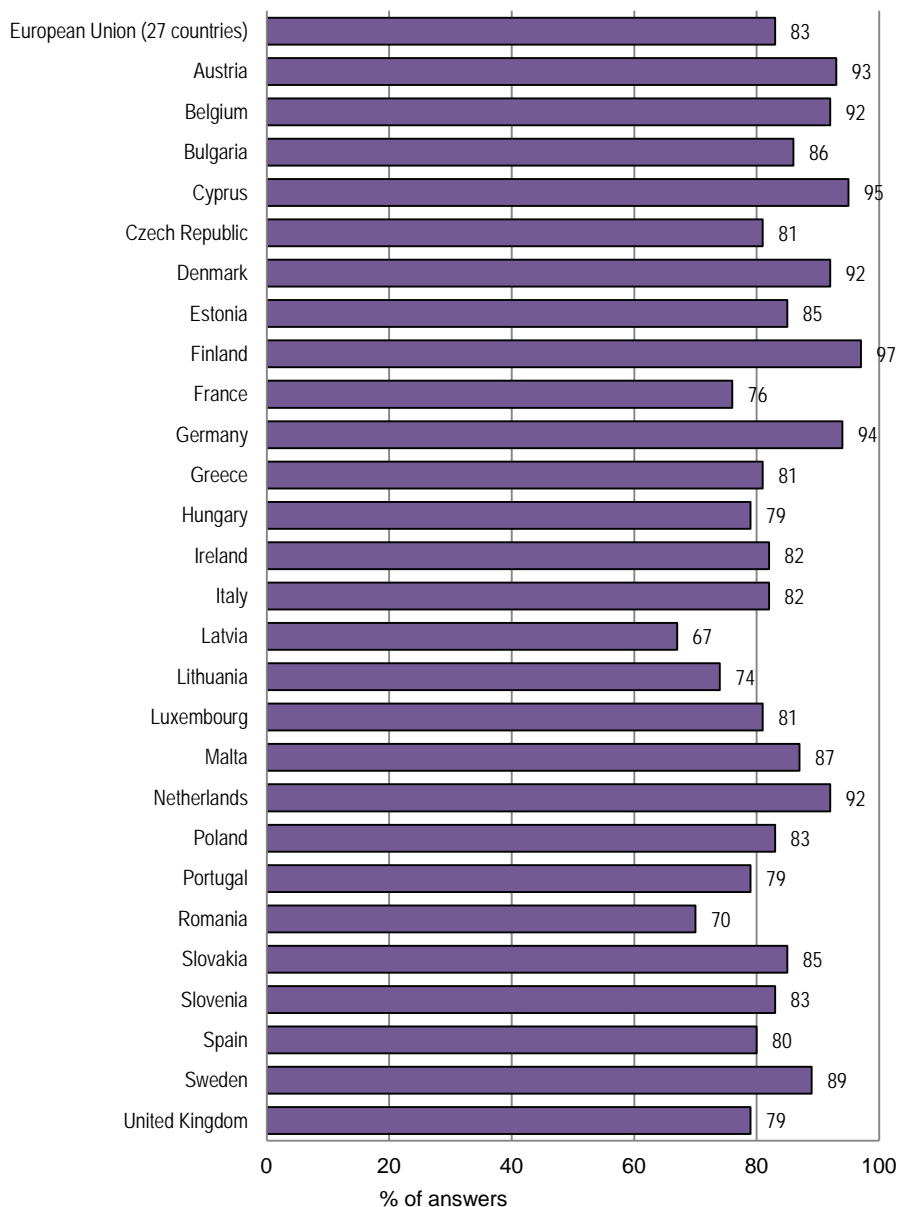
Chart 3.1: Perception of the image of vocational education and training (in percent)



Question: QA9 And you think that vocational education and training has a very positive, fairly positive, fairly negative or very negative image in (OUR COUNTRY)?

Source: Special Eurobarometer 369. 2011. Attitudes towards vocational education and training. Pg. 22

Chart 3.2: Percentage of students who agree that VET positively contributes to the economy of their country



Question: QA13.1 To what extent do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements? Vocational education and training contributes positively to the economy of (OUR COUNTRY)? Presented answer: Total "Agree"
 Source: Special Eurobarometer 369. 2011. Attitudes towards vocational education and training. Pg. 62

The level of agreement with the statement that VET contributes positively to the economy of their country is very high (83 percent). Among the 7EU VET countries, exceptionally high levels of agreement are recorded in Germany (94 percent) and Austria (93 percent). Agreement is only higher in Finland (97 percent) and Cyprus (95 percent). On the other hand, the economic benefits of VET are most widely questioned in Latvia (67 percent) and Lithuania (74 percent). The agreement in these two countries is similar to that in France (76 percent) and Romania (70 percent). Slovenia showed an average level of agreement (83 percent) and can be included in a group together with Poland (83 percent), Ireland (82 percent) and Italy (82 percent) (Special Eurobarometer 369, 2011: 62).

In this context, in the following section we explore which factors affect the decision making of those students who enrol in VET programmes.

3.2 Which factors affected the decision making of learners with respect to VET programmes?

In this section, we first look at which factors impact the vocational pathway of the decision-making process in 27 European countries. Observations are made from diverse positions after respondents completed education. Later on, we explore this issue further, focusing only on those students that are enrolled in Vocation Education and Training, who were approached while they were still in the education process.

Table 3.1 presents different factors relevant to choosing a vocational path. On the level of the EU-27 countries, the most important factor is personal interest in study, followed by future employment opportunities, type of teaching, school status, length of studies, costs and distance from home¹².

Hence, it is very important to stress that differences among the countries have been highly impacted in the way people perceive the term “vocational path” (Kramberger, 1999) and therefore the presented results would require further consideration. Nevertheless, these results can give some idea when comparing the seven studied countries in a broader context. *Personal interest in the programme* has the highest importance in Greece (98 percent), followed by Austria and the UK (both 96 percent). The importance in Germany is average (94 percent) and comparable to Bulgaria or the Czech Republic. Other EU VET countries are below the average, starting with Slovenia (90 percent) and Lithuania (88 percent). The importance of personal interest is the lowest in Latvia (84 percent).

¹² In this survey, the most common source of advice for EU respondents to enrol in VET are parents or other family members (22 percent), followed by someone from the world of work (15 percent), a teacher (15 percent), a friend (11 percent) and a headmaster (5 percent). The centrality of some of these items is further elaborated in section 6.2.3.

Table 3.1: Factors influencing students' choice of their vocational pathway (in percent)

	Personal interest in the subject		Future employment opportunities		Type of teaching (practical or academic)		Image of the school, institution or employer		Length of studies		Costs (including study costs and living expenses)		Distance from your place of living	
	VET	General education	VET	General education	VET	General education	VET	General education	VET	General education	VET	General education	VET	General education
European Union (27 countries)	94	86	89	81	86	78	73	70	70	68	61	66	58	58
Belgium	82	86	77	75	81	78	70	77	56	49	45	41	44	43
Bulgaria	94	71	95	65	79	56	91	70	69	53	60	59	41	45
Czech Republic	94	94	96	93	88	86	79	85	73	79	77	79	67	72
Denmark	88	94	75	72	72	67	59	64	40	45	30	37	32	38
Germany	94	81	89	83	84	79	68	61	60	65	53	65	53	59
Estonia	89	86	79	75	72	71	60	69	53	51	45	63	41	46
Ireland	91	77	91	80	84	75	67	69	75	64	70	63	70	67
Greece	98	84	98	83	92	76	91	76	83	70	72	69	64	61
Spain	94	88	88	80	92	82	64	70	72	69	58	68	54	59
France	92	86	88	82	87	79	70	66	70	66	50	63	46	45
Italy	95	84	93	81	88	79	88	78	85	80	79	69	75	59
Cyprus	96	87	95	87	95	83	91	82	80	73	66	69	59	62
Latvia	84	80	82	75	76	68	51	51	55	52	42	55	36	35
Lithuania	88	93	84	88	83	78	64	68	67	72	62	82	49	57
Luxembourg	95	91	84	81	83	84	72	73	61	59	39	42	42	42
Hungary	95	85	94	84	89	80	87	81	78	76	80	77	68	69
Malta	99	84	95	83	96	81	72	67	83	67	56	53	48	41
Netherlands	97	90	77	61	84	86	67	66	45	34	37	33	43	34
Austria	96	91	96	84	89	81	83	82	85	82	83	80	72	73
Poland	90	91	87	93	86	87	76	85	82	82	72	84	68	74
Portugal	93	89	94	88	93	83	81	84	90	82	89	86	87	81
Romania	91	73	89	72	73	59	81	66	77	63	75	70	61	59
Slovenia	90	88	87	76	67	63	58	57	57	45	61	50	52	43
Slovakia	94	91	94	92	91	81	78	76	80	78	77	81	64	72
Finland	91	91	85	79	71	62	53	68	56	42	50	50	51	49
Sweden	92	95	88	81	84	73	62	65	48	44	33	30	31	41
United Kingdom	96	88	93	80	93	83	73	65	75	66	63	64	61	60

Question: QA4a When you decided to follow a vocational pathway, how important was each of the following factors for you?

QA4b If applicable, when you decided to follow general secondary or higher education, how important was each of the following factors for you? Presented answer: Total "Important"

Source: Special Eurobarometer 369. 2011. Attitudes towards vocational education and training, p. 96

Respondents in Greece seem to take *future employment opportunities* particularly seriously, followed by those in Austria (96 percent). Future employment is also quite important in the UK (93 percent), and can be compared to Italy (93 percent), as well as Hungary, Poland and Slovakia (all 94 percent). The importance of this factor in Germany is average (89 percent). Results for Slovenia are close to the average (87 percent), together with Poland (87 percent). Those in Lithuania (84 percent) and Latvia (82

percent) are below-average. *Type of teaching* was highly considered in the UK (93 percent) and Greece (92 percent). This factor is also important for Austrians (89 percent) who can be included in a group together with respondents from France (87 percent) or Italy (88 percent)). The importance in Germany (84 percent) is closest to the EU-27 average, while the percentage in Lithuania (83 percent) is slightly below-average. Type of teaching is much less important in Latvia (76 percent) and Slovenia, where only 67 percent say it is an important factor.

The image of the school institution influenced 73 percent of people and the level of importance varies highly among the 7EU VET countries. Greece and Austria have a high percentage of those that believe the image of the school institution or employer is important, while the figure for the UK is the same as the average (73 percent). This factor is considered slightly less important in Germany (68 percent) and Lithuania (64 percent) that can be put in the same group with Ireland, the Netherlands (both 67 percent), or Spain (64 percent). Percentages are far below the average in Slovenia (58 percent) and Latvia (51 percent) that are, together with Finland (53 percent), countries with the lowest share of people regarding the image of the school institution as an important factor. Interesting results are also found for the factor *distance from place of living*. Among the observed countries, the highest share was found for Austria (72 percent), followed by Greece (64 percent) and the UK (61 percent). Relatively few people factored distance in their decision making in Germany (53 percent), Slovenia (52 percent), as well as Lithuania (49 percent). The share among the 7EU VET countries is, however, the lowest in Latvia (36 percent) (Special Eurobarometer 369, 2011: 96).

When looking at the relative importance of the factors among 17- and 18-year-old students, we see some similarities and differences with regard to the 7EU-VET data, which can allow some speculation, e.g. the VET population and also the younger generation are driven by different factors when choosing VET education, even though the results cannot be compared directly. One observation may be related to the fact that the population approached in the 7EU-VET study is much more pragmatically or extrinsically driven compared to the general education population in the 7EU-VET countries; as presented in Table 3.2, we can notice that the most common factors that influenced students' decisions on VET programmes across all seven countries were the programme providing *a good foundation for a further career* and *good job prospects*.

Table 3.2: Factors affecting students' decision making about the programme, by countries (in percent)

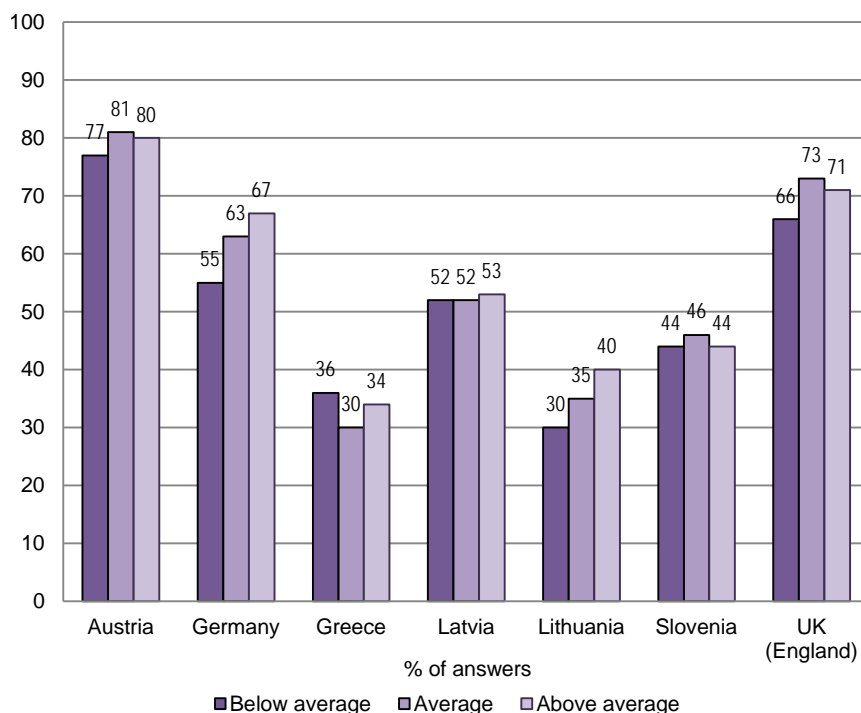
	Austria	Germany	Greece	Latvia	Lithuania	Slovenia	UK (England)
The programme offered good job prospects	78	63	32	53	32	45	70
My previous examination grades prevented me being able to enrol on more preferable programmes	3	7	8	11	9	7	13
My parents suggested I enrol on this programme	13	12	12	20	14	11	14
The occupation(s) related to the programme appealed to me	71	72	32	39	43	57	71
The programme provides a good foundation for further qualifications / education	83	79	48	56	50	56	70
My friends have chosen to undertake the same programme	21	17	27	22	16	10	14
The reputation of the programme was attractive to me	48	41	27	32	28	25	59
Former teachers encouraged me to enrol on this programme	8	12	13	7	5	5	19
This programme was the most appropriate within a reasonable distance from my home	36	36	16	36	18	20	51

Question: A4 How important were the following aspects for you when you were choosing your current programme? Presented answers 4 and 5 on a scale from 1="Not at all" to 5="Very"

In Germany and Austria, more than 80 percent of students believe that their programme provides them with a good foundation for further education and there were no larger differences noted among the students with different grades, once already in the programme. Such differences are noted in the UK and Greece where students with higher grades are more likely to regard their programme as a good foundation for further education. In general, students are likely to report that the appeal of an occupation influenced their choice of programme. In Germany, Austria and the UK, around 70 percent of students reported this, while in the other countries about 50 percent were of this view, with the exception of Greece where only 34 percent of students agreed with this statement. Not a lot of students (around 20 percent) admitted that they chose the programme because of their friends (see Table 3.2). The highest percentage of students agreeing with this statement is in Greece (26 percent). Students usually choose their programme on factors other than simply because their friends chose the same programme. A relatively small proportion of students stated their previous examination grades had prevented them from enrolling in more preferable programmes, across the countries the figure is around 10 percent or less. This is perhaps surprising given that examination grades are held to be important within general education.

We did not find much evidence concerning family socio-economic status affects students' choice of VET programmes, although this might have been expected.^{vi} However, there are some aspects that vary depending on parents' status.

Chart 3.3: Importance of “The programme offered good job prospects”, by country and socio-economic status (in percent)

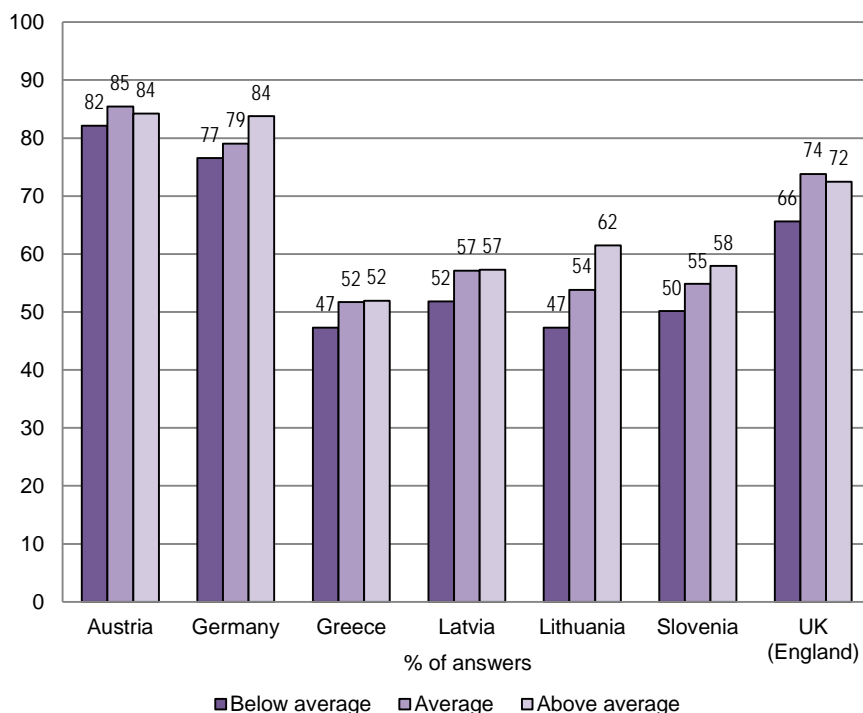


Question: A4_1 How important were the following aspects for you when you were choosing your current programme? The programme offered good job prospects. Presented answers 4 and 5 on a scale from 1="Not at all" to 5="Very"

In Germany students from families with a higher socio-economic status took decisions based on the belief that their programme *offers them good job prospects*. 55 percent of students from families with a socio-economic status below average agreed with the statement as against 63 percent of those with an average economic status and 67 percent of students from families with an economic status above the average. Moreover, and seen in Chart 3.3, the higher the socio-economic status of a student's family, the more likely they are to choose a programme based on the appeal of the occupation related with the programme, but the differences are only relevant for some countries.

Lithuanian students are more likely to choose their programme because they believed the programme *is a good foundation for their further education or qualification* when they come from families with a higher socio-economic status. 62 percent of students with a socio-economic status that is above-average agree with *the statement*, 54 percent of students that are in the average socio-economic class and only 47 percent of those with a below-average status.

Chart 3.4: Importance of “The programme provides a good foundation for further education”, by socio-economic status and country (in percent)



Question: A4_5 How important were the following aspects for you when you were choosing your current programme? The programme provides a good foundation for further qualifications /education. Presented answers 4 and 5 on a scale from 1="Not at all" to 5="Very"

In a nutshell, we can conclude that only some socio-economic backgrounds of VET students influence particular factors of school enrolment. However, based on the survey results one can speculate that current school success importantly contributes to the perception of factors related to decision making. The higher the school success, the stronger is VET students' belief they enrolled in the programme based on the attractiveness of the occupation or the job prospects^{vii}.

Particularly interesting differences are seen in the case of selecting programmes based on friends' participation in Austria and Germany. Students with low grades are more likely to believe they were influenced by friends' programme choice than those with high grades. On the other side, in Latvia and Greece students with an average or below-average socio-economic status also more often decide on their programme based on friends' choices^{viii}. Apparently due to their lower aspirations, students with lower grades or with a lower socio-economic status more often follow their friends' choices rather than their own desires, the social aspect seems to be more important for them. Due to the survey's limitations this should be explored further.

Lastly, it is important to stress parents' education from the viewpoint of the surveyed population, in our survey did not make any differences with regard to perceived decision-making factors (^{ix}link to table Factors by parents' education).

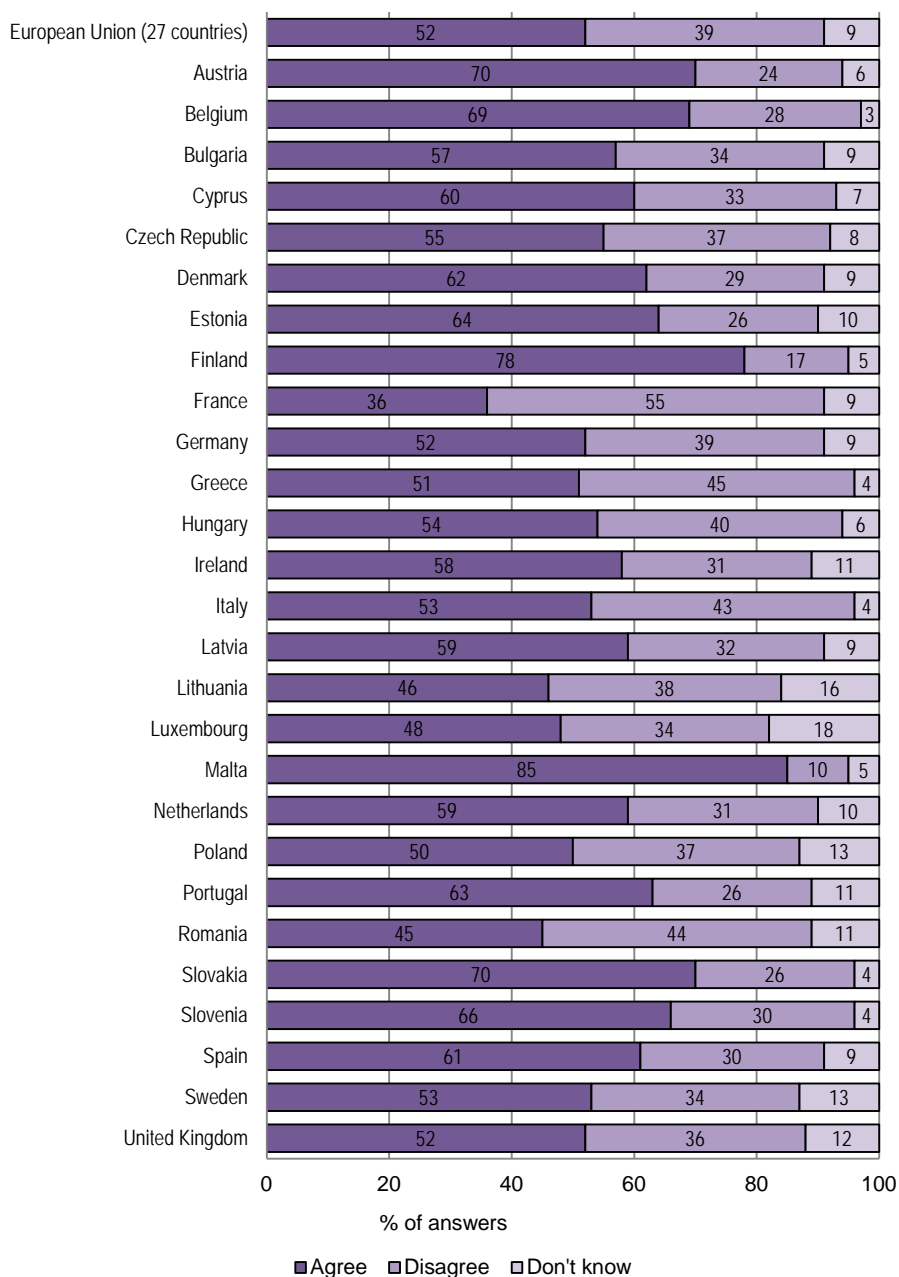
3.3 How do learners judge the importance of different information sources in relation to choosing their VET programmes?

While in the previous section we considered the assessment of how the spectrum of different personal and external factors impacted particular decision-making choices of individuals, here we explore how VET students evaluate external factors as information sources. First, we look again at the general Eurobarometer EU-27 data and then to the results of the 7EU-VET survey. The importance of information sources in the international comparison can first be framed by the general assessment of the appropriateness of information young people receive from schools and employment services. This has been asked in the Eurobarometer survey (see Chart 3.5).

Chart 3.5 presents the data on whether young people receive enough advice concerning their learning and career opportunities from schools and employment services in each country. A majority (52 percent) of EU citizens totally agree or tend to agree with this statement, however 39 percent disagree. Among the seven countries, the level of agreement is highly above-average in Austria (70 percent) and Slovenia (66 percent). The results for these two countries are similar to those for Slovakia (70 percent) and Belgium (69 percent).

Latvia's result is also above-average with 59 percent of those claiming that people receive enough advice concerning their learning and career opportunities. This puts Latvia in a group together with Denmark (61 percent), Cyprus (60 percent), the Netherlands (59 percent) and Ireland (58 percent). Agreement in other 7EU VET countries is average (UK and Germany) or below-average (Greece and Lithuania). Especially Lithuania shows the least promising results (46 percent) and falls into a group of countries with the lowest agreement, together with Luxembourg (50 percent), Romania (45 percent) and especially France (only 36 percent) (Special Eurobarometer 369, 2011: 76). One would expect that in countries where formal institutions do not provide sufficient information sources this would be compensated by other sources.

Chart 3.5: Students' opinion about the statement that young people in their country receive enough advice concerning their learning and career opportunities from schools and employment services



Question: QA6. Could you tell me to what extent you agree or disagree with the following statement: In (OUR COUNTRY) people receive enough advice concerning their learning and career opportunities from schools and employment services.
 Source: Special Eurobarometer 369. 2011. Attitudes towards vocational education and training, p. 76

As can be seen from the 7EU-VET survey, across the countries the sources most often used are parents and family, online information, informative days, previous internships or work placements, and friends and classmates. Teachers are not generally considered an important source of information about VET programmes by students. Across all of the countries, around 10 percent of students rated teachers as an important information source with the exception of the UK where the percentage is higher at 30 percent. In the UK, concerns have been expressed that teachers in lower-secondary schools, who may not have expertise in vocational programmes, are an important source of advice for students who may be going on to different institutions to take VET programmes. In Germany, Latvia and the UK, students taking more demanding¹³ vocational programmes were more likely than other students to rate teachers as an important source of information. Between 30 and 40 percent of students across all of the countries rated parents and family members as an important source of information and that share did not vary based on the level of programmes students were interested in.

Table 3.3: Percentage of VET students reporting the strong relevance of selected information sources in the process of enrolling in the VET programmes, by country

	Austria	Germany	Greece	Latvia	Lithuania	Slovenia	UK (England)
Teachers	9	11	17	13	6	7	35
Parents or family members	39	40	22	29	18	22	35
Friends or classmates	22	19	22	20	12	13	27
Job centre	6	14	9	8	4	7	6
Informative days / fair / open days at school	48	26	9	27	11	39	23
Online information and/or other public media (e.g. newspapers)	28	39	16	27	23	21	23
An aptitude test offered by an educational establishment	14	5	8	16	7	11	16
A previous internship or work placement (not asked in Slovenia)	18	49	17	13	6	NA	16
School counsellors or career advisors (not asked in Austria and Germany)	NA	NA	18	10	7	14	22

Question: A5 How important were the following information sources when you were choosing your current programme? Presented answers 4 and 5 on a scale from 1="Not at all" to 5="Very"

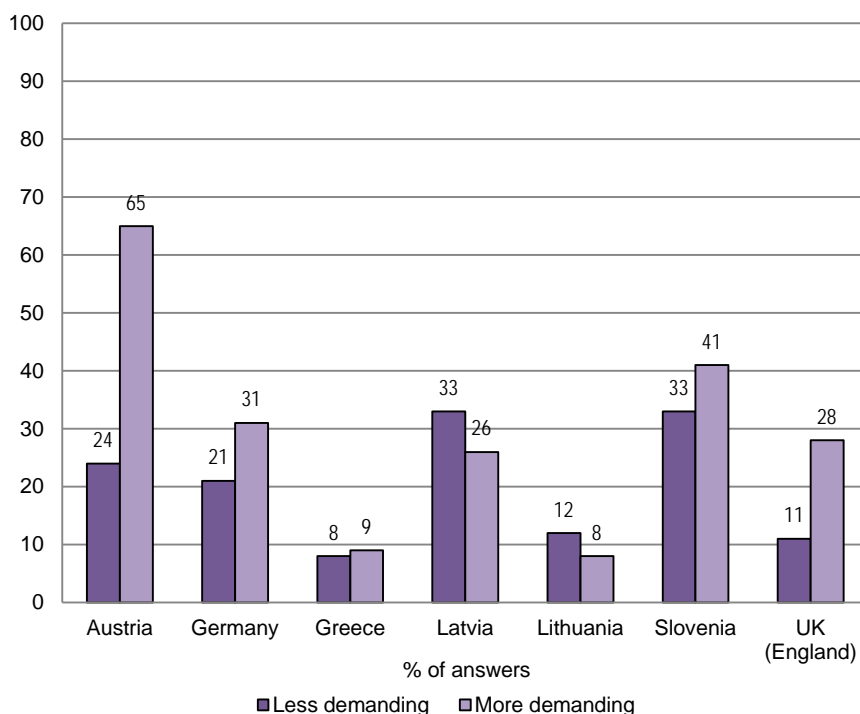
Around 20 percent of students across the countries used their classmates or friends to obtain information about the programmes they were interested in. In Germany and Austria, students attending more demanding programmes were more likely than others to rate their classmates as an important information source, while in the UK the situation is reversed^x. In the UK, the influence of peers is sometimes believed to lower expectations, whereas in Austria and Germany it may work to raise expectations.

¹³ Due to the fact that each country has a different structure of VET programmes, we grouped them in two main categories: more demanding and less demanding programmes. You can find the table of grouped programmes in the appendix.

Job or career centres were rated as important sources of information by approximately 10 percent of students in all seven countries, with the lowest percentages in the UK and Lithuania (4 percent). However, in Germany and Austria students from more demanding programmes gave a lower rating to information from job centres than students from less demanding ones. The differences in the shares are 5 percent in Germany and 8 percent in Austria.

As indicated in Chart 3.6, open days/information days were not rated as an important source of information by students in Greece (8 percent) and Lithuania (10 percent). In contrast, every second Austrian student rates open days/information days as an important source of information.

Chart 3.6: Importance of 'Information days', by country and type of programme (in percent)



Question: A5_5 How important were the following information sources when you were choosing your current programme? Informative days / fair / open days at schools. Presented answers 4 and 5 on a scale from 1="Not at all" to 5="Very"

In other countries, around 25 percent of students rated open days/information days as important. In some countries, there are also differences among the two groups of students based on the level of the programme. In Slovenia, Austria, Germany and the UK, students in more demanding programmes were more likely to rate open days/information days as important, while in Lithuania we encounter a reverse situation. Lithuanian students in lower level programmes were more likely to value open days/information days. The greatest difference was found in Austria where 65 percent of students in

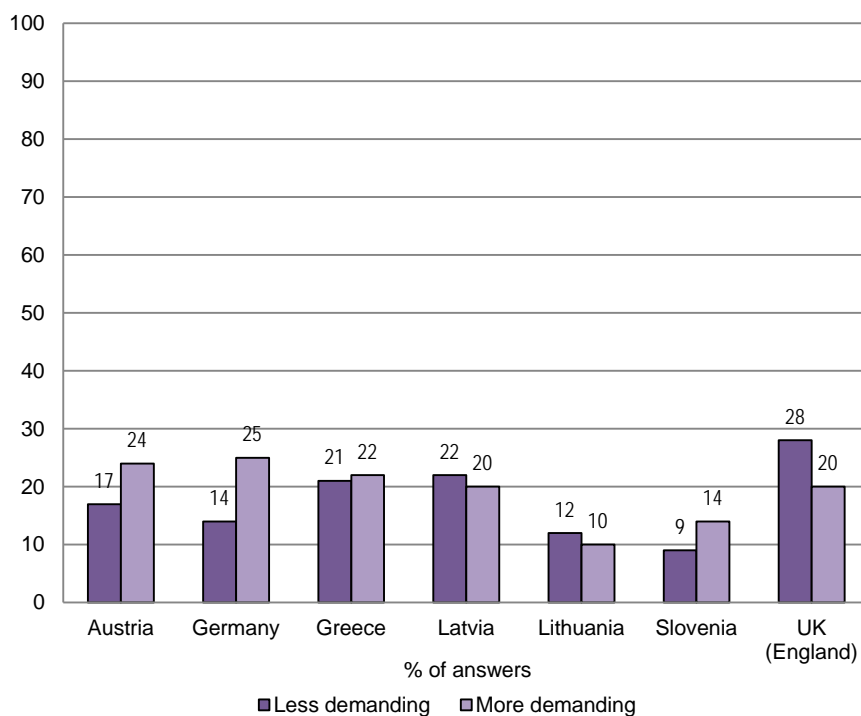
more demanding programmes compared to 24 percent in less demanding programmes said they rated open days/information days as important.

Online information and other public media were highly valued by students in Germany (38 percent) and the least valued in Greece (16 percent) with Slovenia and the UK in the middle (around 20 percent). Again, there were some differences based on how demanding students' programmes are. Students enrolled in more demanding programmes in Slovenia and the UK were more likely to use online information, while in Germany such students were less likely to use online sources compared to those from less demanding programmes. In Latvia, students in less demanding programmes were more likely to rate school counsellors as an important source of information (16 percent) than those in more demanding programmes (9 percent).

Students in Slovenia and Austria most often use informative days and parents as a main source of information about the programmes they are interested in. In Lithuania and Germany most students get information about programmes online and from their parents or other family members. While Greek students most often relied on their parents or friends, Latvian students, besides using their parents, used informative days and online sources for information about programmes. Parents and teachers were the main source of information for UK students.

In Austria and Germany, students (24 percent) from more demanding programmes more often assess friends and classmates as an important information source than those in less demanding programmes (15 percent), while in the UK we can notice the reverse situation (20 percent : 28 percent). In the other countries there are no larger differences based on the type of programme.

Chart 3.7: Importance of “friends and classmates”, by country and type of programme (in percent)

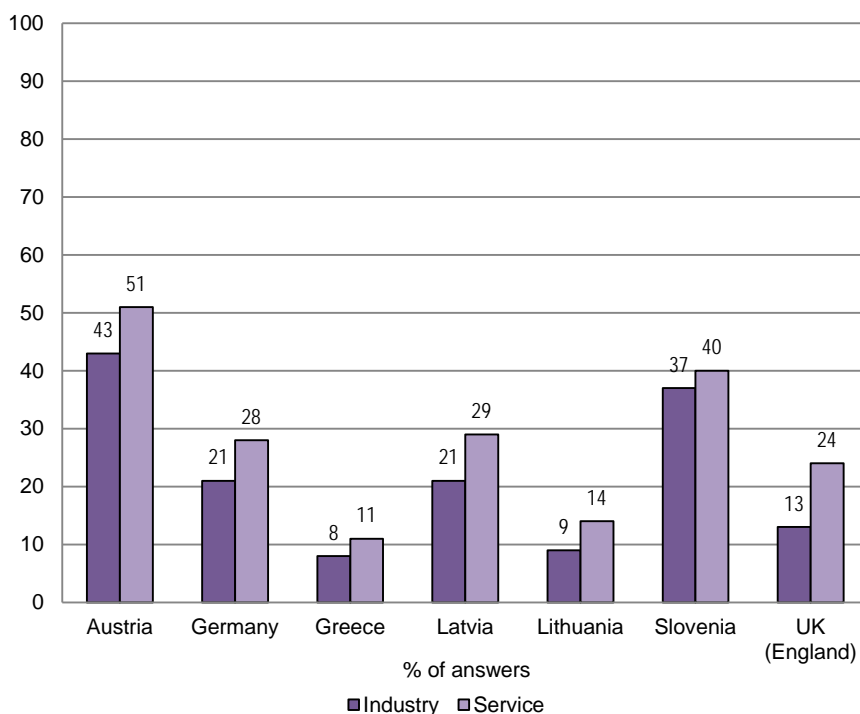


Question: A5_3 How important were the following information sources when you were choosing your current programme? Friends or classmates. Presented answers 4 and 5 on a scale from 1="Not at all" to 5="Very"

We also found that in Austria, Germany, Lithuania, Latvia, the UK and Greece open and information days were rated as important sources of information by more students following programmes relating to the service sector than by those following programmes relating to the industrial sector. These differences are the highest in the UK (9 percent), Austria, Latvia (8 percent) and Germany (7 percent). The biggest share of students using this source can be noticed in Austria and Slovenia, which could mean these information days are well organised and visited in these two countries.¹⁴

¹⁴ See Appendix 3 for definition of sectors

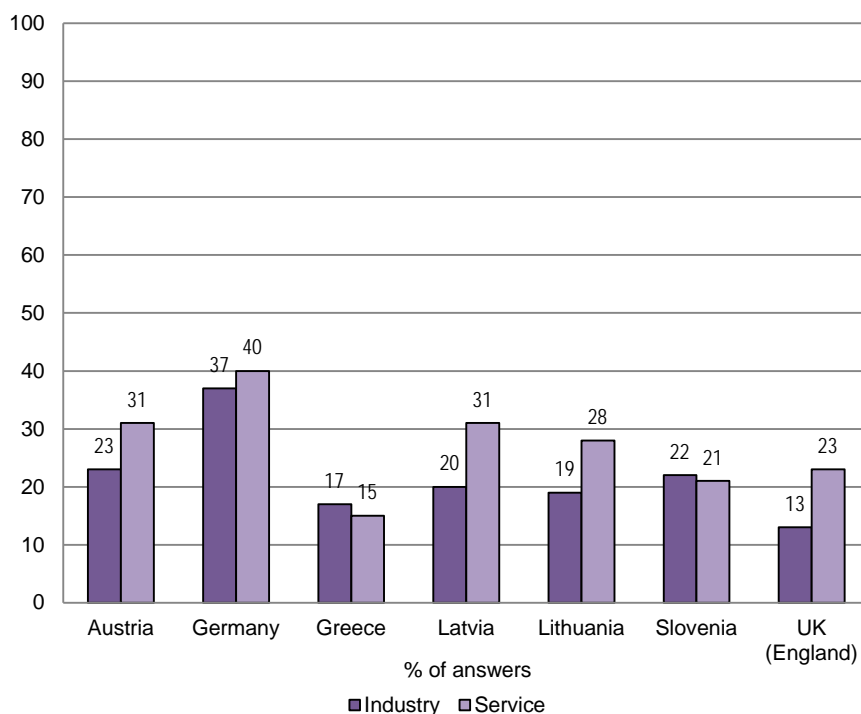
Chart 3.8: Importance of 'Information days', by country and programme sector (in percent)



Question: A5_5 How important were the following information sources when you were choosing your current programme? Informative days / fair / open days at schools. Presented answers 4 and 5 on a scale from 1="Not at all" to 5="Very"

Online information was most often highly rated in Germany (around 39 percent) and least often in Greece (around 16 percent). In Latvia, the UK, Lithuania and Austria, students taking programmes relating to service sector employment were more likely to value online information than those taking programmes relating to industrial employment.

Chart 3.9: Importance of “online information”, by country and programme sector (in percent)



Question: A5_6 How important were the following information sources when you were choosing your current programme? Online Information and/or other public media (e.g. newspapers). Presented answers 4 and 5 on a scale from 1="Not at all" to 5="Very"

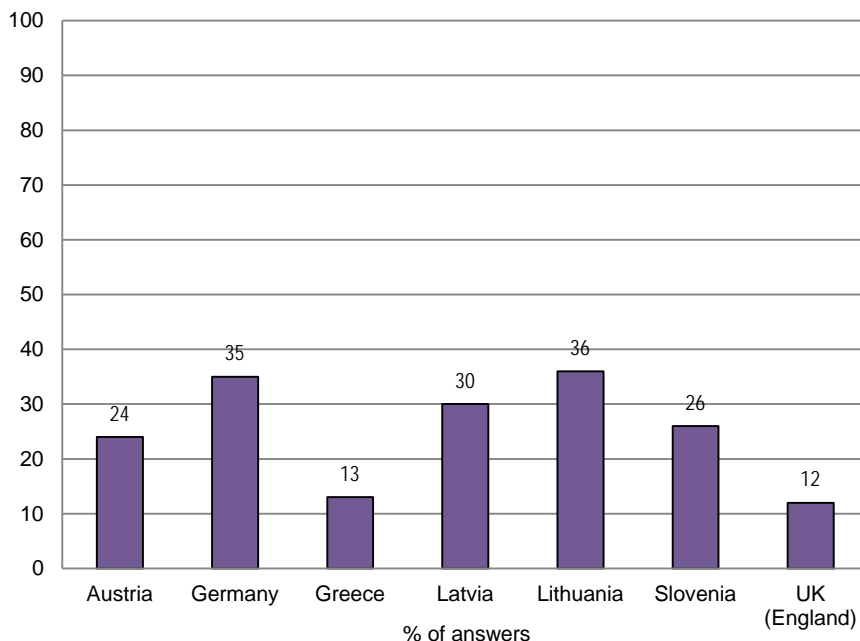
We can conclude from the results that students still very often search for information about programmes among their parents, family members, friends and teachers, which could mean that a programme’s reputation influences students’ decisions about the programme. A lot of students (in some countries the majority) use online information and information days to help them with their decisions. We also confirmed there are some associations between the use of the sources and the types of programmes and the sector of programmes, which would be interesting for further investigation.

3.4 Choosing a VET programme – how wide is the choice, and why?

In this section, we explore the percentage of students that considered two or more alternative programmes when deciding on secondary education. The question of the relative choice in the decision making process is very important as in a way it indicates to what extent VET students are predetermined in their vocational path. The results from the 7EU-VET survey are quite surprising, indicating that in

their final selection the majority of VET students did not (seriously) consider any alternative in their decision-making process.

Chart 3.10: Percentage of VET students considering more than one alternative when selecting programme, by country



Question: A6 Did you consider any alternative programme when you were selecting your current one? Presented answers 3, 4 and 5 on a scale from 1="No, I didn't consider any alternative programme", 2=" I was considering one other alternative programme", 3="I was considering two other alternative programmes" to 5="I was considering more than three alternative programmes"

From the results, we can see that on average only one out of four VET students considered an alternative in the decision-making process. The highest percentages of students considering alternatives are seen in Lithuania (36 percent) and Germany (35 percent), while the lowest are in Greece (13 percent) and the UK (12 percent). Therefore, the key concluding question in this section relates to the question of what determines the breadth of VET students' occupational choices. We assumed that, apart from the socio-demographic characteristics, the relative choice depends on one's personal preferences and the information a student relied upon.

Table 3.4: Effects of selected characteristics on considering alternatives to enrolment in the current VET programme, by 7EU-VET countries¹⁵

	Austria	Germany	Greece	Latvia	Lithuania	Slovenia	UK (England)
Constant (Was considering other programme/s) (B)	3.865	1.647	1.929	0.666	0.217	1.300	0.435
<i>Rationale for programme selection</i>	Exp(B)	Exp(B)	Exp(B)	Exp(B)	Exp(B)	Exp(B)	Exp(B)
Appealing programme	0.647 ^{**} *	0.826 [*]	0.887	0.937	0.812 ^{**} *	0.897	0.836 [*]
Good foundation for further qualifications	0.846	0.946	0.738 ^{**} *	1.019	1.055	0.818 [*]	1.003
Reasonable distance from my home	0.997	0.945	0.895	0.897 [*]	0.960	1.214 ^{**}	0.977
<i>Consideration of information sources</i>							
Teachers	0.984	0.792 ^{**}	0.993	0.937	1.113	0.976	0.847 ^{**}
Family members	1.050	1.039	0.980	1.010	1.137 [*]	0.944	1.235 ^{**} *
Online info. and media	1.042	1.351 ^{**} *	1.024	1.132 ^{**}	1.092	0.966	1.083
<i>Socio-demographic Characteristics and School Success</i>							
Gender (male)	1.208	0.936	1.052	1.255	0.929	1.300	1.021
Parents' primary and lower-secondary education	0.964	0.813	1.031	1.122	2.301 [*]	2.209 ^{**}	NA
Parents' tertiary education	0.730	1.218	0.624 ^{**}	0.853	1.450 ^{**}	1.279	NA
Below-average socio-economic status	0.911	0.689	1.074	1.094	0.573 [*]	0.759 ^{**}	1.642
Above-average socio-economic status	1.157	0.615 ^{**}	0.609	0.796	0.738	0.837	0.515 ^{**} *
Nagelkerke R Square	0.072	0.141	0.082	0.044	0.080	0.069	0.104

*** = $p < 0.01$; ** = $p < 0.05$; * = $p < 0.10$

In the survey we found no evidence that males consider a wider choice than females. However, we found some evidence that parents' education affects the breadth of choice but there are large differences among countries. For example, in Slovenia a lower level of parents' education has a positive effect of a wider choice which means VET students are freer in their decisions. In Lithuania, we found in a way the opposite result: a wider choice characterises students whose parents have a tertiary education. In Greece it is the opposite. Parents with a tertiary education have a negative effect on the breadth of choice.

¹⁵ In the model, we also tested the effects of programme type, place of living, father's and mother's employment status. In the case of the UK and Germany, VET students in the medium and more demanding programme types considered more alternatives than students in less demanding programme types. Only in Slovenia and the UK does living in smaller cities or a village have a positive effect on a wider occupational choice. In Latvia and Lithuania, the full-time employment status of fathers has a positive effect, while in Austria such an effect is held by the employment status of mothers.

Size of the environment in general does not impact the breadth of occupational choice, with the exception of Lithuania where VET students coming from smaller places usually choose from among several different options, and the UK where smaller places limit the available choice. As for socio-economic status, we found some evidence that VET students with a lower socio-economic background consider fewer alternatives when selecting education, while in Germany and the UK this is a characteristic of students from wealthier families. Lastly, in Austria the full-time employment of the mother limits vocational choices, while in Lithuania and Latvia we found some evidence that the full-time employment of the father stimulated students to consider more options. As for VET programme structures, we found no differences among more and less demanding programmes, except in Germany where VET pupils attending more demanding programmes consider a wider spectrum of choice prior to their enrolment in comparison to those in less demanding programmes.

It appears that, more than the abovementioned factors, the breadth of occupational choice is determined by information sources and one's own preferences for the programme that is finally selected. However, there are large differences among countries and no firm conclusions can be drawn. In Austria, Germany and Lithuania, for example, VET students who made their final decision on programme enrolment based on the fact the programme appealed to them did not consider many alternatives. In Greece, this was the case when VET students made their final enrolment decision based on the fact the programme provided a good foundation for further education. As for information sources, we found evidence that students in Germany who relied on the opinion of teachers and online information and public media were more (pre)determined in considering only one programme to enrol in. Teachers also impacted the more straightforward decision of students in the UK, while considering advice from parents or family members broadened the spectrum of choices.

3.5 Conclusions

The perception of VET's image in society varies considerably across the seven countries under observation. From the Eurobarometer EU-27 survey we can see that VET gains the highest reputation in Austria (88 percent) and Germany (84 percent), while Slovenia (50 percent) has the lowest level. Among the seven countries included in the survey, the most important factor influencing students' decisions on enrolment in VET programmes were related to vocational interest: the belief that the programme provides a good foundation for a further career, good job prospects or an appealing programme. A relatively small proportion of students stated that their previous examination grades prevented them from enrolling in more preferable programmes or that they chose the programme because of their friends.

We did not find much evidence that parents' education or family socio-economic status affects students' choices of VET programmes. However, we found the sources most often considered in the decision-making process related to VET enrolment are parents and family. Online information and previous work

experiences in general take second place. Teachers or information days are generally not considered as an important source of information about VET programmes.

On average, only one out of four VET students consider an alternative in the decision-making process. The highest shares of students considering alternatives are seen in Lithuania (36 percent) and Germany (35 percent), while the lowest are seen in Greece (13 percent) and the UK (12 percent). We found some evidence that parents' education affects the breadth of choice but there are large differences among the countries. For example, in Slovenia a lower level of parents' education has a positive effect of wider choice which means VET students are freer in their decisions. In Lithuania, we found in a way the opposite result: a wider choice characterises students whose parents have a tertiary education. We found some evidence that VET students with a lower socio-economic background consider fewer alternatives in selecting education, while in Germany and the UK this is a characteristic of students from wealthier families. Such cross-country differences were also detected when considering personal factors and different information sources.

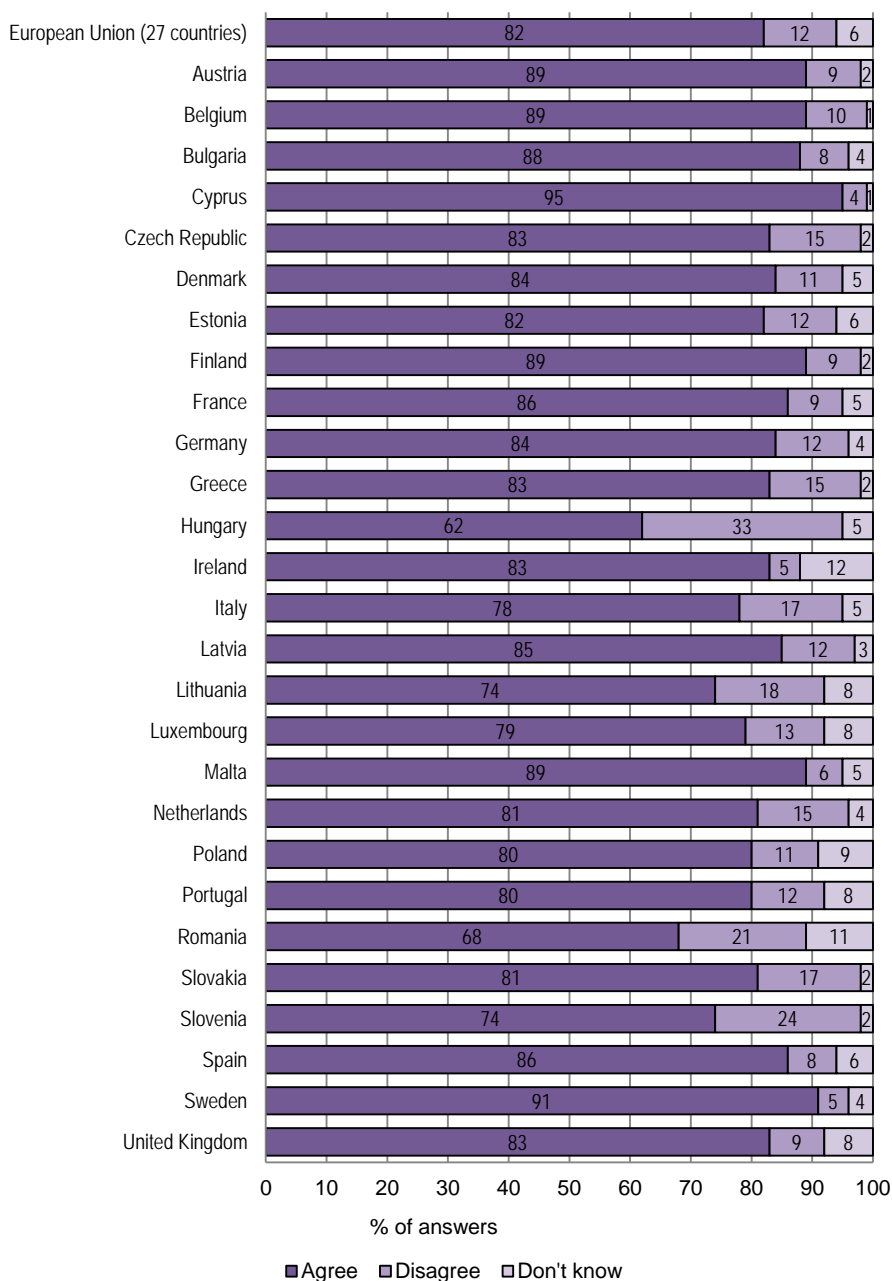
4 ACQUIRED COMPETENCIES

4.1 Relationship between school success and other acquired competencies

The concept of competence development in education has in the last few years been gaining ever more attention. In particular, there is a large debate on the dichotomy and inter-linkage between work-related tacit knowledge and explicit knowledge (Polanyi, 1967; Nonaka and Takeuchi, 1995). The first relates more to the work environment, while the second relates more to formal educational institutions, and well comprehends the notion of occupational or professional knowledge. Tacit knowledge to a large extent resembles the concept of competencies which can be defined as the generators of the potential of an individual's performance, personal characteristics (traits) such as physical characteristics and methods of an individual's response to a situation, self-concept in the sense of habits, values and knowledge in the sense of information that someone has in specific areas (Spencer and Spencer, 1993: 9-10). This definition mostly describes individually acquired competencies, while employers' expectations are labelled as required competencies.

The transition of learners from education to the labour market is often accompanied by the so-called "matching" issue referring to the compatibility between the individual, their education and the professional destination. One can define horizontally mismatched as working in a job matching one's own level but not one's own field of education. Vertically mismatched is related to the condition of working in a job matching one's own field but not one's own level of education. In this context, we first look at how well VET systems prepare learners for work in the 7EU-VET countries.

Chart 4.1: Percentage of citizens agreeing with the statement: “People in vocational education and training learn skills that are needed by employer”

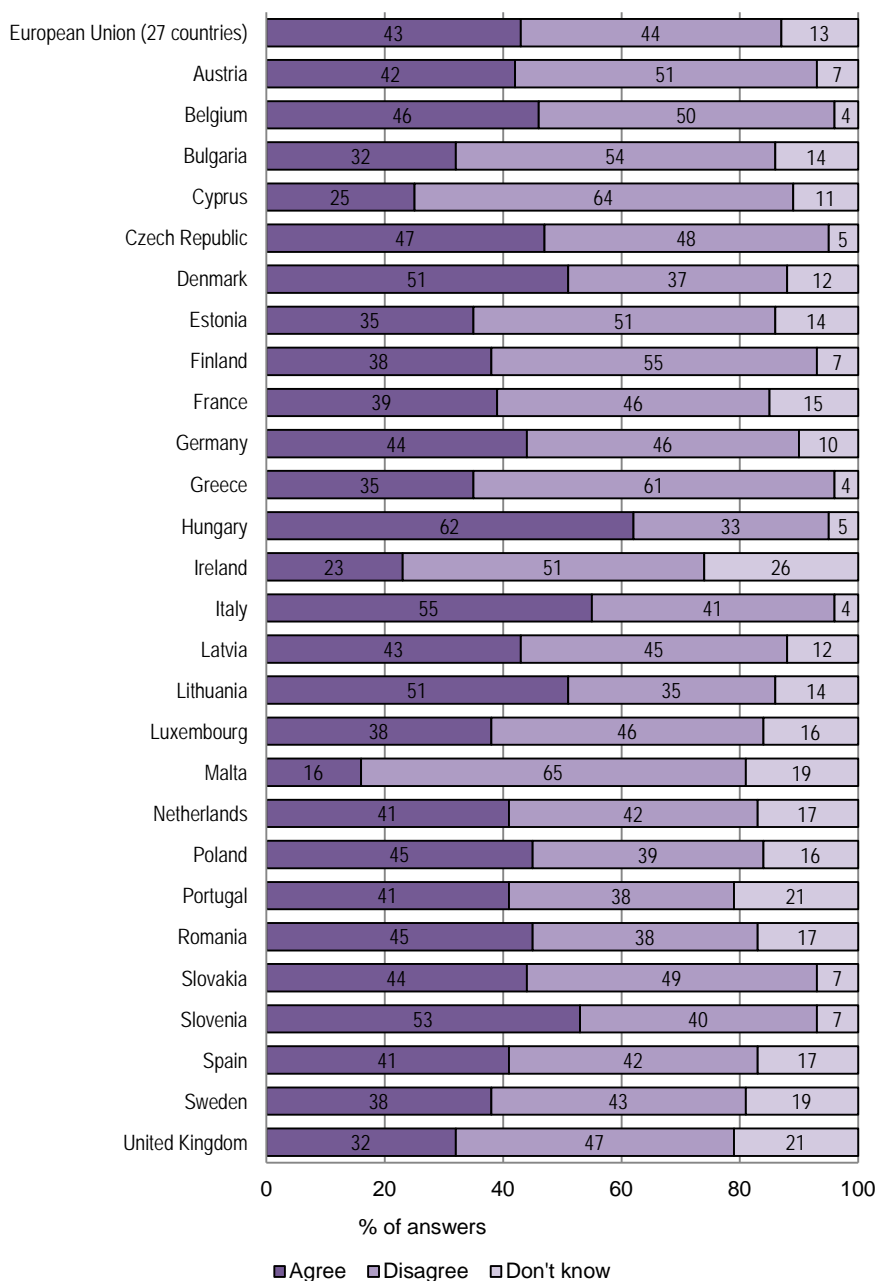


Question: QAI0.6 Please tell me to what extent you agree or disagree with each of the following statements. People in vocational education and training learn skills that are needed by employers.

Source: Special Eurobarometer 369. 2011. Attitudes towards vocational education and training, p. 25

As Chart 4.1 shows, there is strong agreement across the EU-27 (82 percent) with the statement that people in VET acquire skills that are needed by employers. Most 7EU-VET countries are above-average considering this statement, especially Austria (89 percent) with one of the highest levels of agreement together with Cyprus (95 percent) and Sweden (91 percent). Latvia (85 percent), Germany (84 percent), UK (83 percent) and Greece (83 percent) are very close together and their results can also be compared with Spain (86 percent), Denmark (84 percent), as well as Ireland and the Czech Republic (both 83 percent). The lowest results are seen in Slovenia and Lithuania (74 percent). Together with Hungary (62 percent) and Romania (68 percent), these are the countries with the lowest levels of agreement. (Special Eurobarometer 369, 2011: 25) Eurostat data have also explored to what extent VET systems prepare students to set up their own business.

Chart 4.2: Percentage of citizens agreeing with the statement: “Vocational education and training does not prepare people to set up their own business”



Question: QAI0.7 Please tell me to what extent you agree or disagree with each of the following statements. Vocational education and training does not prepare people to set up their own business.

Source: Special Eurobarometer 369. 2011. Attitudes towards vocational education and training, p. 28

The results shown in Chart 4.2 are different from the results gained earlier. Europeans are divided on the question of whether VET prepares people to set up their own business with 43 percent of them overall agreeing and 44 percent of them disagreeing with this statement. Slovenia (53 percent) and Lithuania (51 percent) are two of five Member States where a majority of respondents agree with the statement, together with Hungary (62 percent), Italy (55 percent), and Denmark (51 percent). Germany (44 percent), Latvia (43 percent) and Austria (42 percent) are all close to the average (43 percent), together with Romania (45 percent), Slovakia (44 percent), as well as Spain, Portugal and the Netherlands (all 41 percent). The level of agreement is, among the 7EU-VET countries, the lowest in Greece (35 percent) and the UK (32 percent). Greece is also the country with the highest disagreement (61 percent compared to e.g. 35 percent in Lithuania). In the UK a large number of respondents answered "I do not know" (21 percent). Greece and the UK can be compared to Estonia (35 percent) as well as Bulgaria (32 percent) and Cyprus (25 percent) (Special Eurobarometer 369, 2011: 28). On this basis, one can assume that preparing VET students for work is quite a different phenomenon than setting up one's own business, and both goals cannot be achieved at the same time. However, we can speculate that preparation to set up one's own business can be associated more with factors external to the VET curriculum, in particular where self-employment remains the only option for entering the workforce.

In this section we look at the contribution of VET programmes to the development of generic competencies. VET curricula include the development of knowledge and skills corresponding to particular vocations and many include general subject knowledge, such as mathematics and foreign languages. However, it is generally agreed that in addition to vocational and academic knowledge and skills students need to develop autonomy, responsibility, communication, team working and other 'generic' or 'transverse' or 'key' competencies. The particular catalogue of these additional competencies varies between countries as does the manner in which they are articulated in written curricula (CEDEFOP, 2012). In this survey, an attempt has been made to discover whether and to what degree students believe they are acquiring the following generic competencies: abilities to manage occupational tasks independently, team work, learning abilities, working under pressure, clear communication of one's own ideas, and the ability to approach and engage with others with confidence.

Students were asked to evaluate their own generic competencies. According to the students, the competence that was most highly developed is being able to work as a team member in all countries, except Greece. In Greece, the most highly developed competence is being able to approach and engage with others with confidence; however, working as a team member, quickly familiarising themselves with new tasks and communicating ideas and suggestions to others clearly were very close to the first one. Only half of the students believed they were able to perform well under pressure, which makes it the 'least' acquired generic competence, with especially low percentages in Latvia. The development of generic competencies is relatively strong in Germany, Austria and the UK and somewhat less strong in the other countries. Comparing the countries, we can note the highest percentages of competence acquiring in Germany, Austria and the UK, while Slovenia is somewhere in the middle, and Greece, Latvia and Lithuania have the lowest percentages of students acquiring these competencies. In Austria and

Germany, the lowest acquired competence is being able to communicate ideas and suggestions to others clearly, while in Greece the lowest one was being able to manage occupational tasks independently.

Table 4.1: Percentage of VET students who acquired selected generic competencies to a large extent, by country

	Austria	Germany	Greece	Latvia	Lithuania	Slovenia	UK (England)
Being able to manage occupational tasks independently	77	81	45	48	49	54	75
Being able to work as a team member	85	87	52	62	63	70	83
Being able to quickly familiarise myself with new occupational tasks	74	75	53	56	56	60	76
Being able to perform well under pressure	69	69	46	39	44	44	66
Being able to communicate ideas and suggestions to others clearly	69	62	53	51	49	53	71
Being able to approach and engage with others with confidence (e.g. networking)	72	70	55	57	57	58	71

Question: E1a The following question asks for your perception of certain skills and abilities which are listed below. Please assess your current level of these abilities. Presented 4 and 5 answers on a scale from 1="Poor" to 5="Excellent"

Across all countries, females were more likely than males to report a high level of generic competencies, in particular: being able to manage occupational tasks independently, being able to work as a team member, being able to quickly familiarise myself with new occupational tasks, and being able to communicate ideas and suggestions to others clearly. However, there was no difference between the genders in the development of networking skills and performing under pressure. The biggest differences between genders were seen in Lithuania (8 percent difference) and Austria (7 percent difference), where all or almost all skills are more often developed by female students.

4. Acquired Competencies

Table 4.2: Percentage of VET students who acquired certain competencies to a large extent, by country and gender

	Austria	Germany	Greece	Latvia	Lithuania	Slovenia	UK (England)
<i>Male</i>							
Being able to manage occupational tasks independently	74	78	43	46	45	53	73
Being able to work as a team member	83	86	51	58	59	69	80
Being able to quickly familiarise myself with new occupational tasks	70	72	52	54	54	60	73
Being able to perform well under pressure	67	68	46	39	47	45	67
Being able to communicate ideas and suggestions to others clearly	66	64	51	49	47	54	69
Being able to approach and engage with others with confidence (e.g. networking)	73	72	52	55	54	59	72
<i>Female</i>							
Being able to manage occupational tasks independently	81	83	48	51	56	56	78
Being able to work as a team member	89	88	54	66	69	71	88
Being able to quickly familiarise myself with new occupational tasks	79	78	56	59	60	61	79
Being able to perform well under pressure	73	71	44	40	41	43	66
Being able to communicate ideas and suggestions to others clearly	71	61	57	53	53	52	74
Being able to approach and engage with others with confidence (e.g. networking)	71	68	60	61	61	56	71

Question: E1a The following question asks for your perception of certain skills and abilities which are listed below. Please assess your current level of these abilities. Presented answers 4 and 5 on a scale from 1="Poor" to 5="Excellent"

When considering the sector of the programme as an influence on the development of students' generic competencies slight differences were noted. Students following programmes related to services were more likely to report good generic competencies of the following kinds: managing occupational tasks independently (service : industry = 64 percent : 56 percent), team work (74 percent : 68 percent) and quick familiarisation with new occupational job tasks (67 percent : 60 percent). In all seven countries, students from service programmes rated as one of the highest acquired competencies being able to quickly familiarise themselves with new occupational tasks, while in all seven countries a commonly highly acquired competence of industry students is being able to work as a team member. The programme sector is only significantly associated with the acquisition of competencies in Latvia and Austria. In Austria, students from service programmes rate the acquisition of the ability to perform under pressure and to be able to quickly familiarise themselves with new occupational tasks higher, while in Latvia that is the case for all competencies.

Table 4.3: Percentage of VET students who acquired certain competencies to a large extent, by country and sector of the programme

	Austria	Germany	Greece	Latvia	Lithuania	Slovenia	UK (England)
<i>Industry</i>							
Being able to manage occupational tasks independently	75	79	44	45	48	54	73
Being able to work as a team member	85	87	52	58	63	69	82
Being able to quickly familiarise myself with new occupational tasks	71	73	53	53	55	60	71
Being able to perform well under pressure	66	68	46	37	46	44	62
Being able to communicate ideas and suggestions to others clearly	69	64	51	48	50	55	77
Being able to approach and engage with others with confidence (e.g. networking)	72	71	53	53	56	59	69
<i>Service</i>							
Being able to manage occupational tasks independently	79	81	46	50	51	55	75
Being able to work as a team member	85	87	52	64	63	70	83
Being able to quickly familiarise myself with new occupational tasks	76	76	54	58	58	60	76
Being able to perform well under pressure	72	70	46	41	43	44	66
Being able to communicate ideas and suggestions to others clearly	68	61	56	53	49	52	71
Being able to approach and engage with others with confidence (e.g. networking)	72	69	57	60	57	57	72

Question: E1a The following question asks for your perception of certain skills and abilities which are listed below. Please assess your current level of these abilities. Presented answers 4 and 5 on a scale from 1="Poor" to 5="Excellent"

In Latvia and Lithuania, students with well-educated parents are more likely to believe they are able to perform well under pressure. Similarly, in Slovenia, Latvia and Lithuania students with highly educated parents are more likely to develop good communication skills. Again, Slovenian and Lithuanian students with poorly educated parents are less likely to develop good networking skills compared to those with well-educated parents^{xi}.

In general, across the countries the socio-economic status of the students' families does not seem to be associated with their reported capability in terms of generic competencies. However, some differences among the three groups can be observed. In Lithuania and Latvia, the better the socio-economic status of the students' families, the greater the likelihood that they reported good skills in managing occupational tasks independently and quickly familiarising themselves with new occupational tasks^{xii}.

According to our results, the most acquired competence across the 7EU-VET countries is being able to work as a team member, followed by being able to quickly familiarise yourself with new occupational

tasks, being able to manage occupational tasks independently and being able to approach and engage with others with confidence. On the other side, students are least comfortable performing well under pressure. We found some association between gender and the percentage of acquired competencies, which showed that usually females have a higher percentage of acquired competencies. A similar association exists with the sector of the programme where students in the service sector are more likely to report the higher acquisition of competencies such as managing occupational tasks independently, team work and quick familiarisation with new occupational job tasks. How students acquire selected competencies was also associated with the education and socio-economic status of the students' parents, however this was only the case for particular countries, not in general.

4.2 Relationship between school success and other acquired competencies

In the last section, we presented results showing school success determines the ability to perform occupational tasks independently, and team work. In this part of the book we look at the relationship between the ability to quickly familiarise oneself with new tasks related to occupational tasks, to perform well under pressure, the ability to communicate ideas to others and the ability to approach and engage with others with confidence (e.g. networking), acquired competencies and school success. As expected, there are quite large differences in generic competencies between students with low grades and those with high ones. Across the countries, students with higher grades were more likely (by 10 percent or more) to report they have good generic competencies than those with lower grades.

Table 4.4: Percentage of VET students who acquired certain competencies to a large extent, by country and school success

	Austria	Germany	Greece	Latvia	Lithuania	Slovenia	UK (England)
<i>Low grades</i>							
Being able to quickly familiarise myself with occupational tasks	69	74	53	56	52	53	65
Being able to perform well under pressure	62	66	45	40	41	39	54
Being able to communicate ideas and suggestions to others clearly	62	62	49	50	46	51	64
Being able to approach and engage with others with confidence (e.g. networking)	70	70	52	57	54	55	61
<i>High grades</i>							
Being able to quickly familiarise myself with new occupational tasks	79	81	60	70	68	71	87
Being able to perform well under pressure	76	77	48	45	52	53	78
Being able to communicate ideas and suggestions to others clearly	73	65	66	66	59	57	79
Being able to approach and engage with others with confidence (e.g. networking)	74	68	65	66	64	62	82

Question: E1a The following question asks for your perception of certain skills and abilities which are listed below. Please assess your current level of these abilities. Presented answers 4 and 5 on a scale from 1="Poor" to 5="Excellent"

Differences in acquiring the competence of being able to work as a team member between students with high grades and those with low ones were found in Austria, Greece, Slovenia and the UK; with a difference of up to 14 percent. In Austria, Germany, Lithuania, Slovenia and the UK, students with higher grades more often declare they are being able to quickly familiarise themselves with new tasks related to a job occupation compared to students with lower grades. That students with higher grades more often perform well under pressure can be noted in the UK, Slovenia, Austria and Germany. In Greece, Austria, Latvia, Lithuania and the UK, students with higher grades also more often believe they are able to communicate ideas and suggestions to others clearly, while in Slovenia, Greece, Lithuania, Latvia and the UK students with lower grades less often report being able to approach and engage with others with confidences compared to those students with higher grades.

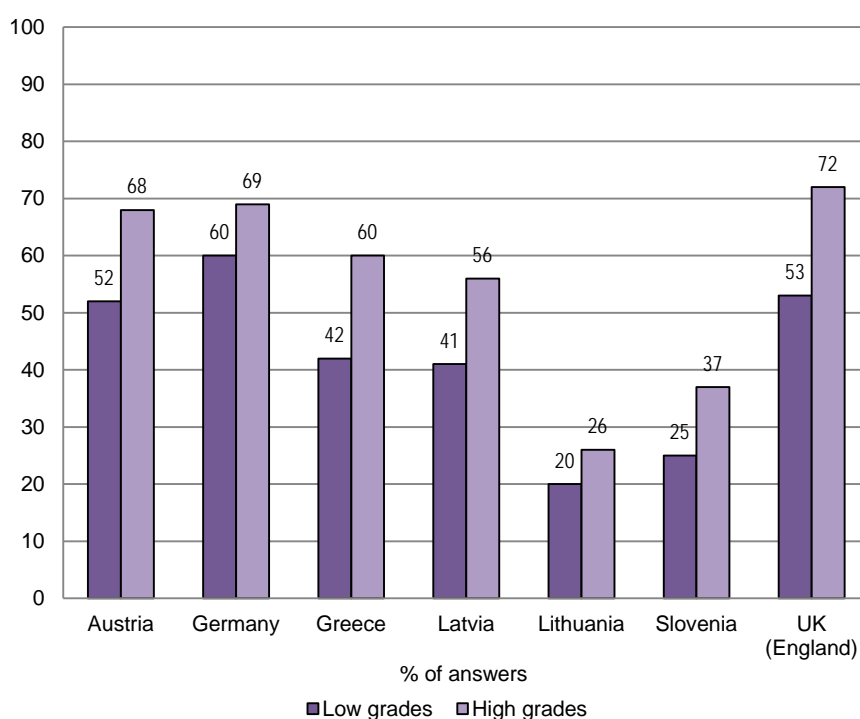
The greatest difference, 19 percent, emerges for autonomy, i.e. being able to manage occupational task independently, which means that students with high grades far more often believe they have acquired the mentioned competence than those with low grades. The biggest differences among students based on their school success are noted in the UK (25 percent).

In all seven countries female students slightly more often believe the programme contributes to developed competencies, although in Greece and Latvia this difference is slightly stronger. Looking overall, approximately one out of two students in the countries believe their programme prepares them well for

these activities, with the highest percentage in the UK, Austria and Germany and the lowest in Slovenia and Lithuania^{xiii}.

Lastly, we also looked at students with low grades, who were less likely to judge that their programmes were equipping them with generic competencies than students with high grades. Across all countries, the difference was 37 percent : 53 percent, but it was particularly high in the UK and Greece (18 percent) and the lowest in Lithuania (6 percent). This makes sense in the UK because of the emphasis there on generic competencies as an essential element of success, which might not be the case in some other countries or VET systems.

Chart 4.3: Percentage of VET students who acquired competencies overall to a large extent, by country and students' success



Question: E1b Overall, to what extent does your current programme prepare you for these activities? Presented answers 4 and 5 on a scale from 1="Not at all" to 5="Very"

Students with low grades were less likely to judge that their programmes were equipping them with generic competencies than students with high grades. Across all countries, the difference was 37 percent : 53 percent, but it was particularly high in the UK and Greece (18 percent) and the lowest in Latvia (6 percent) and Germany (9 percent). In Austria, Slovenia, Lithuania, the difference between these two groups of students is around 14 percent, which again confirms the existing association between school success and a student's acquisition of the competence.

In conclusion, we can say that surveying the relationship between school success and acquired competencies raises one of the most vital issues in the international comparison of VET systems. Being aware of the limitations of the self-assessment approach for surveying competencies, we found some associations between both elements. In an earlier section (6.4.2) we speculated that, in the case of the ability to independently perform occupational tasks and team work, school learning and training have a contribution to these competencies, although the model could also be reversed assuming that generic competencies help to explain the success of learners because they are competencies that are employed in learning as well as in work. Clearly, there is a need to undertake further survey activities in this direction.

4.3 Conclusions

In this section we confirmed that VET pupils who study more achieve better grades. However, we could not find such evidence for Germany and the UK. We assume that in some VET segments and countries it matters more what students do in school than after it, and therefore school systems do not assess in any extensive way study hours after school. We found some evidence that study behaviour patterns importantly determine school success: striving for the highest possible marks has by far the strongest effect in all countries. Interest in practical subjects does not have any effect on school success in any of the surveyed countries. However, striving for the highest possible grades might have not much in common with understanding of the learning subject or studying after school. The importance of understanding the learning content positively affects school success only in Slovenia and Latvia. In most countries, we found that the school success of VET pupils is much more driven by trying to impress employers and that ensures access to further education than by school teachers and peers. With the exception of Lithuania, pupils of more educated parents do not have higher grades. We assume that parents whose pupils end up in vocational education and not in general education do not worry how well their children are doing in school and pay more attention to their children's job destination.

There are large differences in the way VET students assess the level of their acquired competencies. The competence that was according to our results the most highly developed is being able to work as a team member, where on average three out of four students have developed this competence well, while only every second student believed they were able to perform well under pressure. The ability to manage occupational tasks independently was best assessed in Germany, Austria and the UK, while in other countries the share of such learners is significantly lower. In general, across all countries, females and students of service-related programmes were more likely than males to report a high level of generic competencies. Parents' education only had a positive effect on the level of acquired competencies in some countries: in Slovenia, Latvia and Lithuania students with well-educated parents are more likely to believe they are able to perform well under pressure and to have developed good communication skills. In the case of other competencies, the effect of socio-demographic differences is small.

Other important determinants of the ability to carry out independent work are school success and professional motives. Those students with better grades and those who in the longer term are driven by the motivation to acquire solid occupation professional skills will, according to our survey data, be able to work more independently and they have better developed some other competencies. Learning behaviour generally had a smaller impact on the level of acquired competencies than one would expect and each country under observation can be labelled according to their different results.

Overall, one out of two students believes their programme contributes importantly to the development of generic competencies, with the highest percentages seen in the UK, Austria and Germany and the lowest in Slovenia and Lithuania. However, in most countries we found a relationship between school success and the development of generic competencies. Better grades are an important predictor of a higher level of school success.

5 FUTURE CAREER ASPIRATIONS AND FURTHER EDUCATION

In this section, we explore the key drivers of VET students' professional careers. Second, we look at which employment sectors learners would like to work in. Third, we examine their motives and preferences regarding further education and the key determinants of further learning decisions.

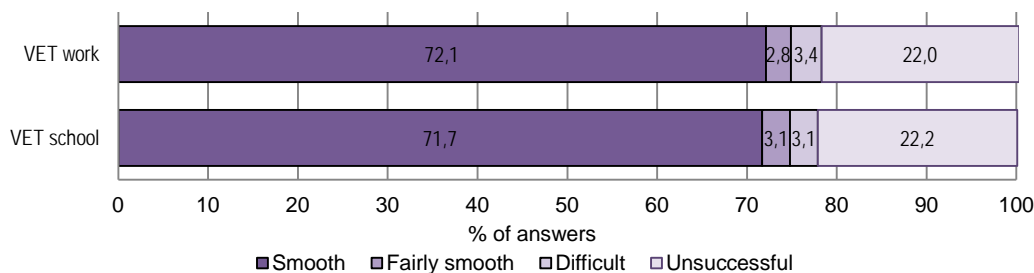
5.1 The context

When observing future career planning, it is very important to consider the particularities of VET systems relating to the transition from education to the labour market and further education. Following the CEDEFOP (2012) report, the transition from formal education to the labour market for medium-level VET graduates suggests that 22 percent of respondents experience an unsuccessful transition regardless of their educational orientation. The transition is, however, smooth or fairly smooth for 75 percent of graduates of workplace-based VET programmes or school-based programmes.

In Europe (EU-27), every second graduate of school-based programmes (aged 25–29) finds a job in the first 6 months after leaving their formal education, while in the work-based programmes three out of four graduates do so. On average, almost every third graduate from school-based VET programmes has to wait for their first job for more than 24 months. For 30- to 34-year-olds, less than one out of two finds a job in the first 6 months after leaving their formal education, while for those in work-based VET programmes the situation is better (68.8 percent) (CEDEFOP, 2012: 51)¹⁶

¹⁶ It should be noted that Germany, Norway and Switzerland have been excluded from the sample.

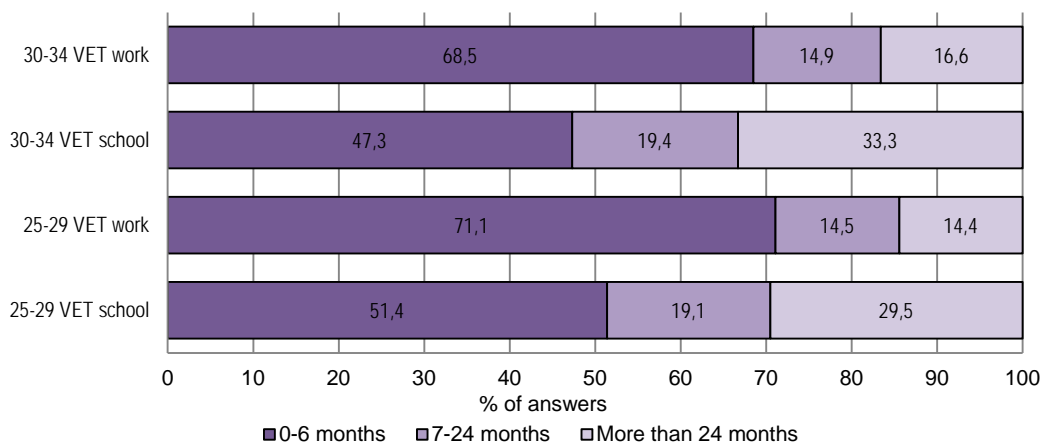
Chart 5.1: Transition from formal education to the labour market for medium-level VET graduates, by type of VET, 20- to 34-year-olds, EU-27+, 2009



It should be noted that Germany, Norway and Switzerland have been excluded from the sample.

Source: CEDEFOP, European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training. 2012. From education to working life. The labour market outcomes of vocational education and training, p. 51

Chart 5.2: Minimum duration of periods without employment after leaving formal education for the last time for medium-level VET graduates, by type of VET and age, EU-27+, 2009



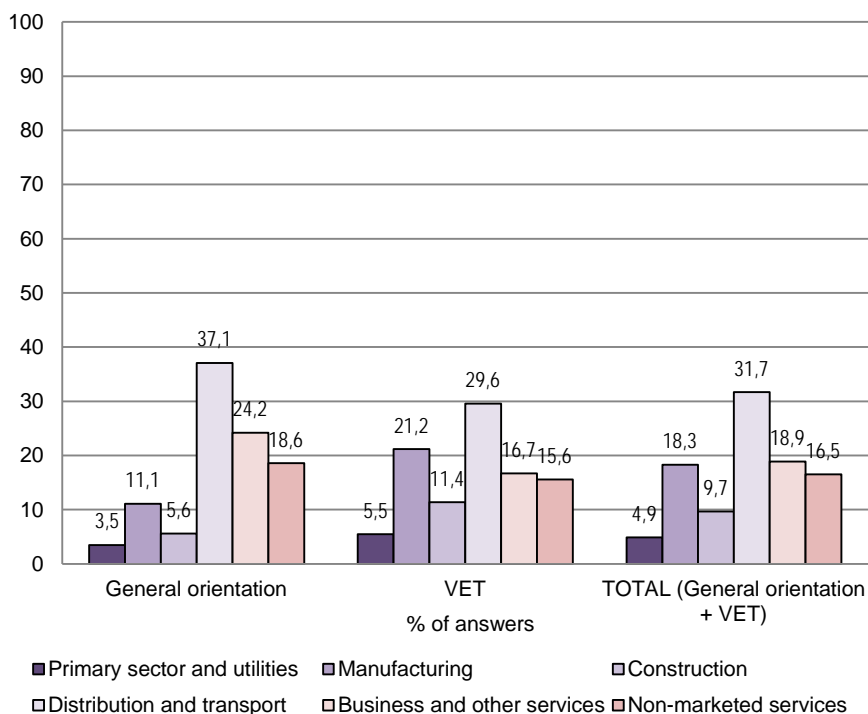
It should be noted that Germany, Norway and Switzerland have been excluded from the sample.

Source: CEDEFOP, European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training. 2012. From education to working life. The labour market outcomes of vocational education and training, p. 51

Chart 5.3 presents employed medium-level graduates by orientation and sector of activity. Graduates of general education programmes mainly find jobs in the field of distribution and transport (37.1 percent), followed by business and other services (24.2 percent), as well as non-marketed services (18.6 percent). They less commonly work in fields of manufacturing (11.1 percent), construction (5.6 percent), as well as in the primary sector and utilities (3.5 percent). Graduates from VET programmes, when compared to those in general programmes, more often work in manufacturing (21.2 percent), as well as construction (11.4 percent), although their primary field of work is still distribution and transport (29.6 percent).

As expected, general education graduates are more likely to work in service sectors than VET graduates, with this pattern holding true for all countries, except Greece. The percentage of those working in the service sector is, for the 7EU-VET countries, highest in Greece and the UK, followed by Germany, Latvia and Austria, which are all above the EU average. The proportion of medium-level graduates working in the service sector is lowest in Slovenia and especially Lithuania.

Chart 5.3: Employed medium-level graduates, by orientation and sector of activity, 15- to 34-year-olds, EU-27+, 2009



Source: CEDEFOP, European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training. 2012. From education to working life. The labour market outcomes of vocational education and training, p 61

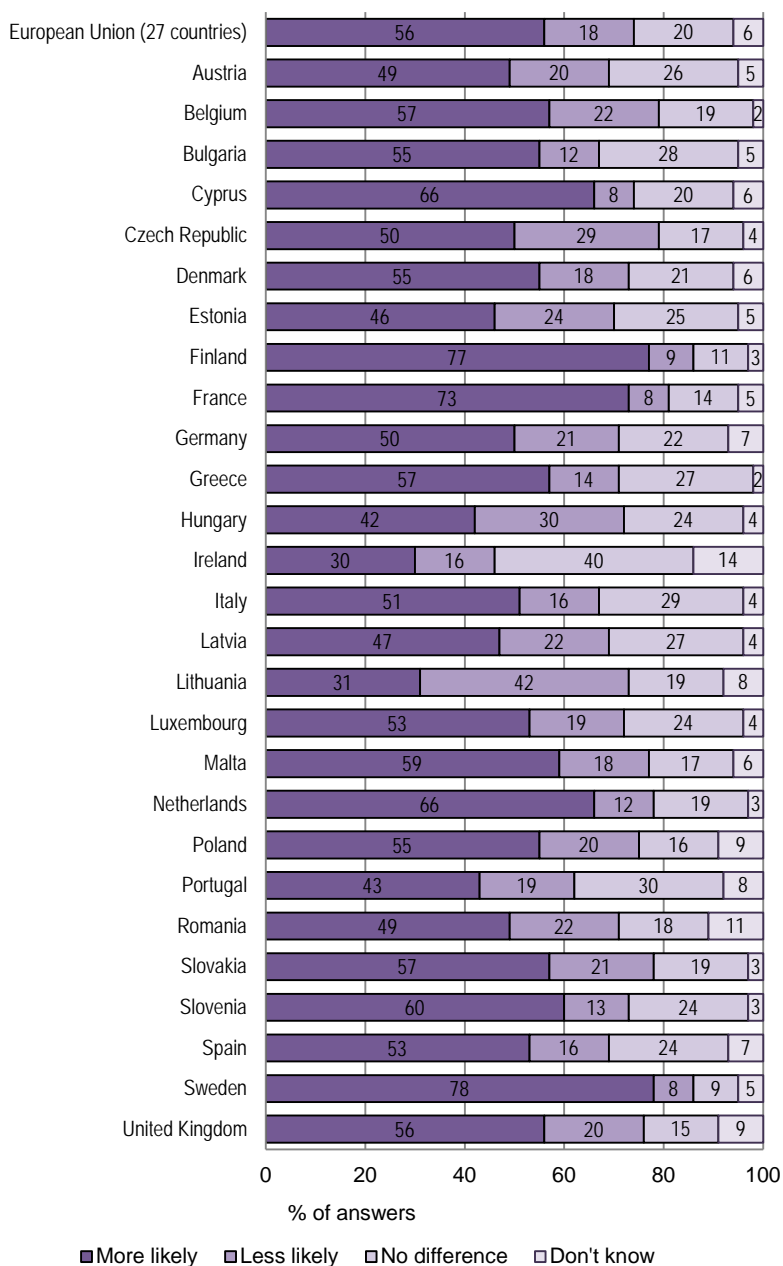
The results for Greece and the UK can be compared to countries with the highest proportions, such as Luxembourg, the Netherlands, as well as Malta and Portugal. Germany, Latvia and Austria are comparable to Spain, Denmark, Finland and Belgium. Slovenia is closest to the average, together with Bulgaria and Hungary. Lithuania can be compared to Estonia, Poland and Romania. (CEDEFOP, 2012: 61)

Following the CEDEFOP (2012) report, VET graduates are more likely than general education graduates to work in the primary, manufacturing and construction sectors. This pattern is found in all countries except for Greece and it is most pronounced in Eastern European countries, as well as Ireland and Iceland. As seen in Chart 5.3, the percentage of VET graduates is in the majority of countries much more prominent than the percentage of general education graduates, although the difference is not so

significant in Bulgaria, Latvia and, as already mentioned, Greece. Lithuania is one of the countries with the highest percentages of medium-level graduates working in non-service sectors, together with Romania, Poland and Estonia. The figure for Slovenia is closest to the average and is comparable to Ireland, Hungary and Bulgaria. Austria, Latvia and Germany's results are similar. Their results are below-average and comparable to Finland and Spain. The UK and Greece are the two countries with the lowest percentages of medium-level graduates that work in non-service sectors. The shares are only lower in the Netherlands and Luxembourg^{xiv}.

A more detailed analysis of the manufacturing sector shows the prevalence of VET graduates: 82.8 percent of 15- to 34-year-old workers with a secondary or upper-secondary diploma are VET graduates; the percentage is greatest for mechanical engineering (87.9 percent), metals and metal products (87.1 percent) and wood and paper (85.9 percent) and the lowest in printing and publishing (73.1 percent) (CEDEFOP, 2012: 62). These data are related to the question of whether VET graduates are more likely believed to be able to find a job after graduation in comparison to graduates of general education. The results are presented in Chart 5.4.

Chart 5.4: Percentage of citizens' beliefs about whether people who have completed vocational education and training are more or less likely to find a job after their studies compared to those who have completed general secondary or higher education

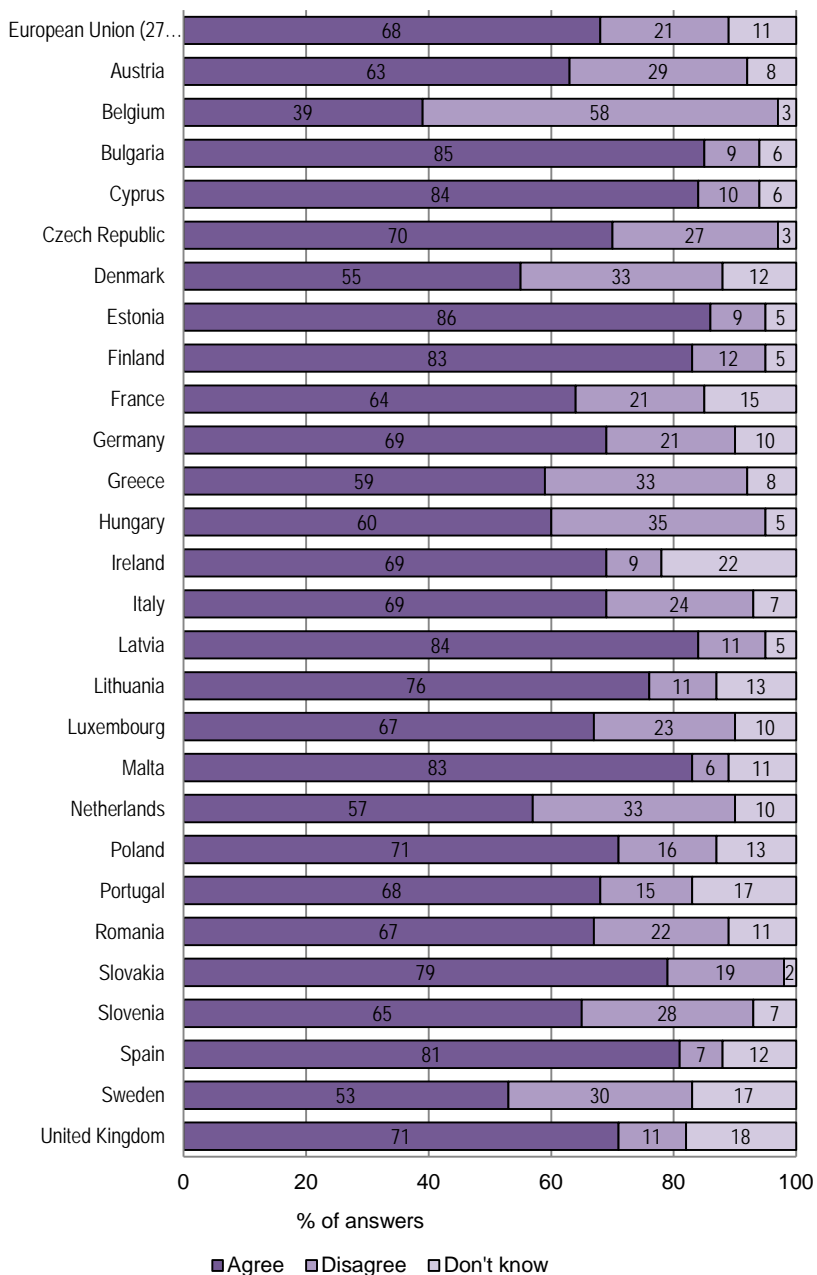


Question: QA12. Do you think that people who have completed their vocational education and training are more likely or less likely to find a job after their studies than people who have completed their general secondary or higher education?

Source: Special Eurobarometer 369. 2011. Attitudes towards vocational education and training, p. 112

A majority of respondents in the EU-27 believe that completing vocational education and training makes a person more likely to find a job than someone who has completed general secondary or higher education (56 percent), although the differences between countries are significant. Among the 7EU-VET countries, Slovenia (60 percent) and Greece (57 percent) have the highest percentages of those agreeing with the analysed statement and can be compared to Malta as well as Slovakia and Belgium. The UK's result is average, while the percentages in Germany (50 percent), Austria (49 percent), and Latvia (47 percent) are below-average and comparable to the Czech Republic, Romania and Estonia. Lithuania's result (31 percent) is highly below-average and very exceptional. The share of those that believe completing VET makes a person more likely to find a job than someone who has completed general secondary or higher education is only lower in Ireland (30 percent); however, not on account of those that do not agree with the statement (only 16 percent) but those who believe there is no difference (40 percent). This picture is related to the question of the extent to which VET education enables learners to continue schooling with university. (Special Eurobarometer 369, 2011: 112)

Chart 5.5: Percentage of citizens agreeing with statement: “Vocational education and training enables people to continue with university studies afterwards”



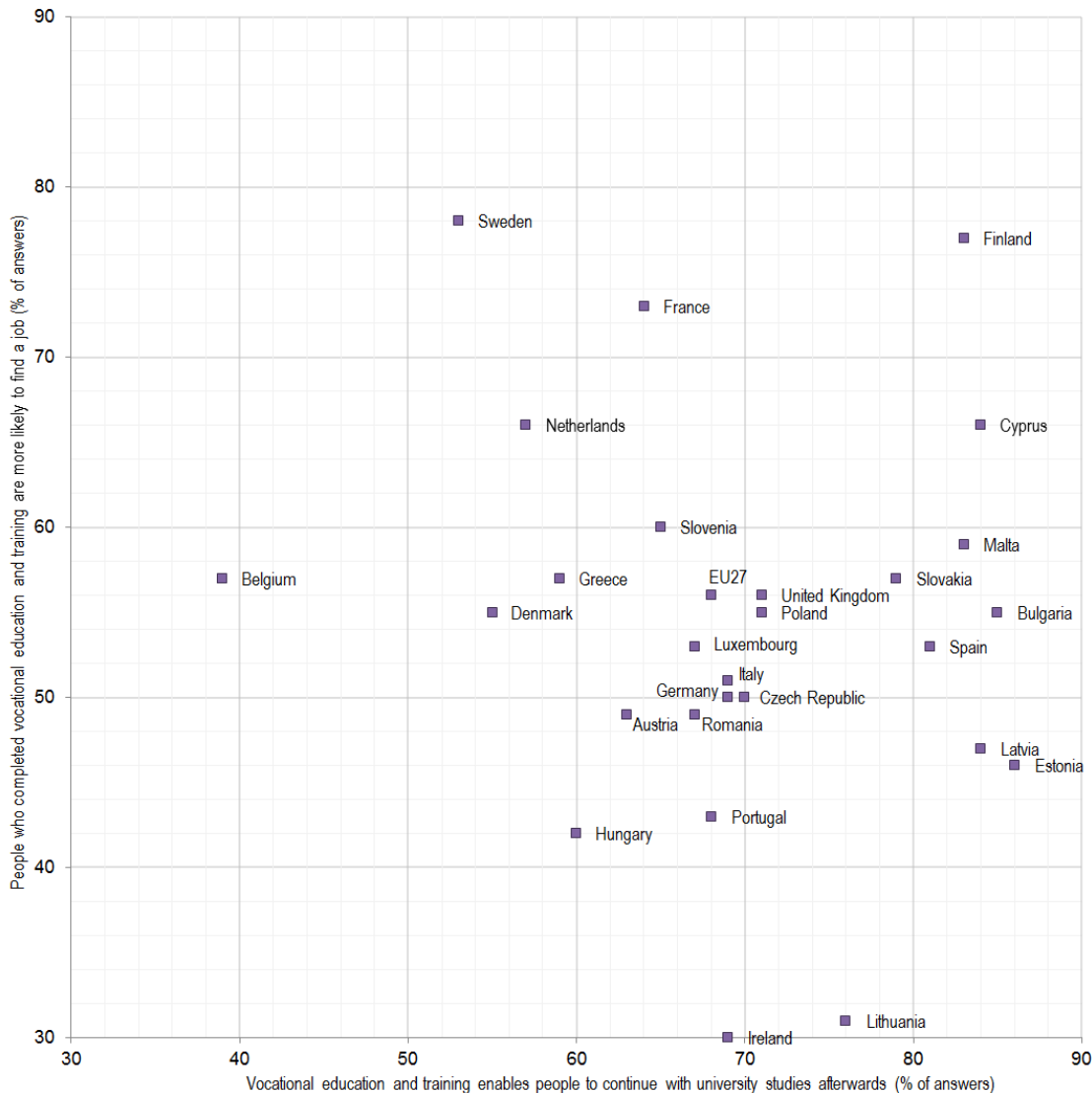
Question: QAI0.4 Please tell me to what extent you agree or disagree with each of the following statements. Vocational education and training enables people to continue with university studies afterwards.

Source: Special Eurobarometer 369. 2011. Attitudes towards vocational education and training, p. 42

Over two-thirds (68 percent) of all EU respondents believe that VET enables people to continue with university studies afterwards (25 percent totally agree, 43 percent tend to agree). Latvia is one of the countries with the highest proportions of people agreeing with the statement (84 percent) and can be compared to Estonia, Bulgaria or Cyprus. Percentages in Lithuania (76 percent) and the UK (71 percent) are also above-average. The results are similar for Eastern European countries – Slovakia and Poland. The agreement level in Germany falls around the average (69 percent) together with the Czech Republic, Italy or Ireland. The level of agreement in Slovenia (65 percent) and Austria (63 percent) seems to be a little below-average. Greece was the lowest with only 59 percent and falls into the group of countries with the lowest agreement, where the Netherlands, Denmark and Sweden can also be included. (Special Eurobarometer 369, 2011: 42)

If we look at Chart 5.5, we can note by far the highest percentage (in both over 75 percent) of Finnish people who believe in both spheres of VET that it enables people to continue further education and that VET graduates are more likely to find a job than those who have finished general education. The lowest share of people (39 percent) believing that VET enables people to continue further education can be noted in Belgium with around 58 percent of people there believing that VET graduates have better chances of finding employment. Lithuania and Ireland have the lowest number of people (around 30 percent) who trust that VET provides a qualification that will guarantee the quick finding of a job, but they a high level of belief in VET as preparation for further schooling (around 70 percent). Beside Finland, high percentages of people believing that VET graduates are more likely to find employment than those from general programmes can be noted in Sweden, France, the Netherlands and Cyprus (65 percent and above), while the biggest shares of people trusting in VET's preparation for further education are noticeable in Estonia, Latvia, Bulgaria, Malta, Slovakia and Spain (80 percent and above). Austria and Germany are fairly close to each other with around 50 percent of people judging VET graduates as more likely to find a job and between 60 and 70 percent of people who agree that VET enables people to continue education at university level. In Latvia, there are far more people who trust that VET is an enabler for further education than those (47 percent) who believe VET graduates are more likely to find employment. In Slovenia, Greece and the UK, around 58 percent of people find it more likely that VET graduates will find a job compared to general education graduates. However, when it comes to people agreeing with the statement that VET enables further schooling we can find a slight difference among those three countries with Greece having the lowest percentage (59 percent), followed by Slovenia (65 percent) and the UK with 71 percent. All 7 EU countries except Lithuania have somewhere in between 50 and 60 percent of people that believe VET is more likely to enable a student to find a job compared to general education. In Germany, Slovenia, Greece, Austria and the UK we can note relatively comparable results for both objectives of vocational education, finding a job and enabling further education, while in Latvia and Lithuania the percentages of people trusting in VET as an enabler for further education are higher than those trusting in VET as a better job provider than general education.

Chart 5.6: Percentage of people agreeing with statement: “Vocational education and training enables people to continue with university studies afterwards” by percentages of people believing VET graduates are more likely to find a job compared to graduates of general education



Questions: QA12. Do you think that people who have completed their vocational education and training are more likely or less likely to find a job after their studies than people who have completed their general secondary or higher education? Presented answer "More likely"

QA10.4 Please tell me to what extent you agree or disagree with each of the following statements. Vocational education and training enables people to continue with university studies afterwards. Presented answer "Agree"

Source: Prepared based on data from Special Eurobarometer 369. 2011. Attitudes towards vocational education and training. Pg. 42

In the next section, we look more deeply at the relationship between VET education and further careers, considering only the 7EU-VET countries.

5.2 What drives VET students towards their professional career?

Based on our survey, we were concerned to investigate learners' aspirations for a future career. First, we looked at which drivers are important for young people across the seven countries and whether a strong aspiration is associated with other important variables.

Learners reported which objectives concerning their future professional careers are the most important for them. These objectives represent the aspirations of learners. We would expect these aspirations to be formed as a consequence of socio-demographic factors, but also as a result of past educational experience.

Table 5.1: Drivers of VET students' professional development, by country (in percent)¹⁷

	Austria	Germany	Greece	Latvia	Lithuania	Slovenia	UK (England)
Obtaining solid occupational proficiencies	66	66	49	59	44	57	80
Receiving a high income	82	83	51	66	56	63	86
Gaining job security	91	93	50	67	65	55	84
Having responsibility at work	72	75	48	63	68	54	84
Having opportunities to learn new things at work	79	80	48	63	67	61	87
Undertaking interesting tasks in the workplace	87	85	44	59	56	64	85
Having a job that makes me happy	94	93	56	70	71	75	90
Having a good relationship with colleagues	92	92	60	67	72	81	88
Advancing to a high level of status in society	57	53	48	59	62	71	73
Having enough spare-time to do other things in life	84	77	38	59	59	77	78
Making and maintaining relationships with others (e.g. family and friends)	78	76	62	70	74	79	86

Question: D1 To what extent do you agree with the following statements concerning your professional and life goals? Presented answers 4 and 5 on a scale from 1="Not at all" to 5="Completely"

In general, the most important objectives overall, in almost every country, were "having a job that makes me happy" and "having good relationships with colleagues" (average 79 percent). Only slightly less highly rated was "making and maintaining relationships with others (e.g. family and friends)" (average 75 percent). We can conclude that the most important objectives for 17- and 18-year-olds across the seven countries are intrinsic and related to professionalism (Pavlin et al., 2010). However, objec-

¹⁷ Ranks and percentage points are indicated.

tives relating to occupational proficiency, income, job security, learning at work, interesting tasks in the work place, social status and leisure are also very important, although we found some important differences across the countries.

The first thing we can note is that in the UK, Austria and Germany (79 percent or above on average) the shares are relatively bigger than in other countries, where the average is around 63 percent with the lowest in Greece at around 50 percent. Some objectives were particularly important in some countries but not in others. Austria and Germany have very similar results with having a job that makes them happy, having a good relationship with colleagues and gaining job security as the most important drivers, and advancing to a high level of status in society as the least mentioned driver. We can also note some similarities in Greece, Latvia and Lithuania, in all three of these countries the most common drivers are having a job that makes them happy, having a good relationship with colleagues and making and maintaining relationships with others. In Greece, having enough spare time to do other things in life is the driver with the lowest percentage, while in Lithuania that is obtaining solid occupational proficiencies. In Slovenia, the least common driver is having responsibility at work, while the three most often mentioned ones are having a good relationship with colleagues, having enough spare time to do other things in life and maintaining relationships with others, while in the UK students are most often driven when they have opportunities to learn new things at work, have a job that makes them happy and have good relationships with colleagues. Similarly to Germany and Austria, the driver with the lowest percentage is advancing to a high level of status in society.

Learners' preferences for objectives show the influence of gender, particularly in five countries: Germany, Austria, the UK, Lithuania and Slovenia. In these countries, female students usually rate some drivers such as happiness in their work, job security and good relationships with co-workers higher than male learners. Looking more closely at Austria, female students rate obtaining solid occupational proficiencies, gaining job security, having responsibility at work, undertaking interesting tasks in the workplace, having a job that makes them happy, having good relationships with colleagues and making and maintaining relationships with others a few percent higher than male students, while they rate advancing to a high level of status in society a little lower. German female students also rate obtaining solid occupational proficiencies, gaining job security, having responsibility at work, having opportunities to learn new things at work, having a job that makes them happy, and having good relationships with colleagues higher, while they rate advancing to a high level of status in society and having enough spare time a little lower than male students. In the UK, gaining job security, having responsibility at work, having a job that makes them happy and undertaking interesting tasks in the workplace are rated higher by female students. In Lithuania, this is the case for the following three drivers: obtaining solid occupational proficiencies, having a job that makes them happy and having good relationships with colleagues. Slovenian female students are, compared to male students, more often driven by gaining job security, having responsibility at work, having opportunities to learn new things at work, having a job that makes them happy, and having good relationships with colleagues, advancing to a high level of status in society and having enough spare-time and making and maintaining relationships with others.

Table 5.2: VET students' drivers of professional development, by country and gender (in percent)

	Austria	Germany	Greece	Latvia	Lithuania	Slovenia	UK (England)
<i>Male</i>							
Obtaining solid occupational proficiencies	63	70	48	56	40	56	80
Receiving a high income	84	87	51	65	54	61	86
Gaining job security	88	92	47	66	62	51	82
Having responsibility at work	69	74	48	61	62	49	81
Having opportunities to learn new things at work	77	77	47	62	63	58	86
Undertaking interesting tasks in the workplace	85	85	43	58	53	63	83
Having a job that makes me happy	91	91	55	66	66	71	89
Having a good relationship with colleagues	89	90	59	64	67	78	86
Advancing to a high level of status in society	62	57	48	57	57	67	71
Having enough spare-time to do other things in life	82	81	37	59	57	75	78
Making and maintaining relationships with others (e.g. family and friends)	74	75	60	68	68	76	85
<i>Female</i>							
Obtaining solid occupational proficiencies	69	62	49	63	50	58	82
Receiving a high income	80	79	52	66	58	65	86
Gaining job security	94	94	54	68	70	59	87
Having responsibility at work	75	77	50	65	77	61	87
Having opportunities to learn new things at work	80	83	50	65	74	64	89
Undertaking interesting tasks in the workplace	90	85	46	61	62	66	88
Having a job that makes me happy	98	95	59	74	79	80	93
Having a good relationship with colleagues	95	94	62	69	80	84	90
Advancing to a high level of status in society	53	49	48	61	69	76	76
Having enough spare-time to do other things in life	86	73	41	59	62	80	78
Making and maintaining relationships with others (e.g. family and friends)	83	76	64	72	82	83	88

Question: D1 To what extent do you agree with the following statements concerning your professional and life goals? Presented answers 4 and 5 on a scale from 1="Not at all" to 5="Completely"

There were some associations between socio-economic status and the commitment of learners to particular objectives. In Austria, Germany, Latvia and the UK, a higher socio-economic status is associated

with a stronger commitment to striving for occupational proficiencies. Higher socio-economic status is associated with a stronger commitment to ‘having a job that makes me happy’ in Austria, Germany, Latvia and the UK. In Austria, students with a lower socio-economic status rank the importance of gaining job security higher than those students with a higher socio-economic status. However, in Greece the situation is reversed since students with an above-average or average socio-economic status value gaining job security more than those with a below-average status. In general, we find that socio-economic status does have some significant associations, but they vary among the countries and there is no clear influence on certain types of objectives^{xv}.

5.3 Which employment sectors do learners aspire to work in?

The most popular employment area among students is services (34 percent or above), with the highest rate in Slovenia and Latvia (44–45 percent) and the lowest in Lithuania and Austria (34–35 percent). In Austria, with 26 percent industry and trade areas share second place in popularity among students. In Germany, the second most popular employment area is industry (35 percent), in Lithuania, Latvia, Slovenia and the UK that is trade (32 percent), while for Greece are the other areas (22 percent). The least popular area is non-governmental organisations in all seven countries, with 8 percent or less.

Table 5.3: Students’ preferences for working in major employment areas, by country (in percent)¹⁸

	Austria	Germany	Greece	Latvia	Lithuania	Slovenia	UK (England)
Industry (e.g. producing industry, steel, motor, oil)	26	35	21	16	29	18	27
Services (e.g. nursing, policing, hairdressing)	35	36	37	44	34	45	41
Trade (e.g. banking, financing, business)	26	20	19	36	32	28	32
Agriculture, forestry and fishery	10	7	8	12	9	10	4
Public administration (e.g. local government, education)	19	19	9	13	12	18	16
Non-governmental organisation (e.g. charities, not-for-profit organisations)	3	4	6	7	5	8	4
Other	17	19	22	15	10	18	6

Question: D5 Which sector would you like to work in the most?

If we compare students’ preferences for employment areas by sector of their programme, we can observe some interesting differences. Across all seven countries, students from industry programmes have far stronger preferences than those from service programmes, with the biggest differences in Austria (39 percent) and the UK (33 percent) and the lowest in Germany (22 percent) and Lithuania (20 percent). As expected, we obtained the reverse results for working in services with the highest differences in

¹⁸ Ranks and percentage points are indicated

Greece (33 percent) and the UK (30 percent) and the lowest Austria (16 percent) and Germany (22 percent). In Austria, Germany and Latvia, service students expressed a stronger preference for working in trade than industry students, however in Greece we can notice the opposite situation. Agriculture, forestry and fishery are more popular among industry students in all countries except Germany and the UK, where we see no significant difference. In contrast, work in public administration is more attractive to service students in Austria, Germany, Lithuania, Slovenia and the UK. We observe that the sector of a programme is significantly associated with students' preferences. Students from an industry programme expressed a stronger attraction to industry as well as agriculture, forestry and fishery, while service students were more attracted to services, trade, and public administration.

Table 5.4: Students' preferences for working in major employment areas, by country and sector (in percent)

	Austria	Germany	Greece	Latvia	Lithuania	Slovenia	UK (England)
Industry							
Industry (e.g. producing industry, steel, motor, oil)	49	57	32	33	38	33	77
Services (e.g. nursing, policing, hair-dressing)	25	21	20	28	23	36	12
Trade (e.g. banking, financing, business)	14	12	22	28	31	26	21
Agriculture, forestry and fishery	15	7	10	21	13	16	6
Public administration (e.g. local government, education)	11	14	9	13	11	12	2
Non-governmental organisation (e.g. charities, not-for-profit organisations)	2	3	5	5	4	7	0
Other	14	22	25	16	11	23	4
Service							
Industry (e.g. producing industry, steel, motor, oil)	10	25	8	7	18	7	24
Services (e.g. nursing, policing, hair-dressing)	41	43	57	52	47	53	42
Trade (e.g. banking, financing, business)	35	23	15	40	33	30	33
Agriculture, forestry and fishery	7	7	5	7	5	5	4
Public administration (e.g. local government, education)	24	21	9	13	14	22	17
Non-governmental organisation (e.g. charities, not-for-profit organisations)	4	5	7	9	6	8	4
Other	20	18	19	15	9	15	6

Question: D5 Which sector would you like to work in the most?

Further, students' aspirations in relation to employment sectors were gendered in all countries: gender was significantly associated with commitments to work in different sectors. Across the countries, 37 percent of males as against 10 percent of females wanted to work in industry, with the highest percentage of male students in Germany (53 percent) and the lowest in Latvia (26 percent). 53 percent of fe-

males as against 26 percent of males wanted to work in services, with the highest rates of female students in Greece (65 percent) and Latvia (60 percent) and the lowest in Austria (45 percent) and Germany (48 percent). In Latvia and Austria, female students prefer to work in trade compared to male students, while in Greece the situation is the reverse with 23 percent of male students compared to 12 percent of female students desiring to work in trade. Agriculture, forestry and fishery is more popular among male students in all countries except the UK with the highest differences in Slovenia (14 percent) and Latvia (13 percent). On the other hand, female students more often expressed a preference for working in public administration and non-governmental organisations. The first association can be noted in Austria, Germany, Lithuania and Slovenia with a difference of approximately 10 percent, while the latter is in Austria, Latvia, Lithuania and Slovenia with a difference of 4 percent. We can conclude from the results that working in industry, agriculture, forestry and fishery is more preferable for male students, while working in services, trade, public administration and non-governmental organisations is more strongly desired by female students.^{xvi}

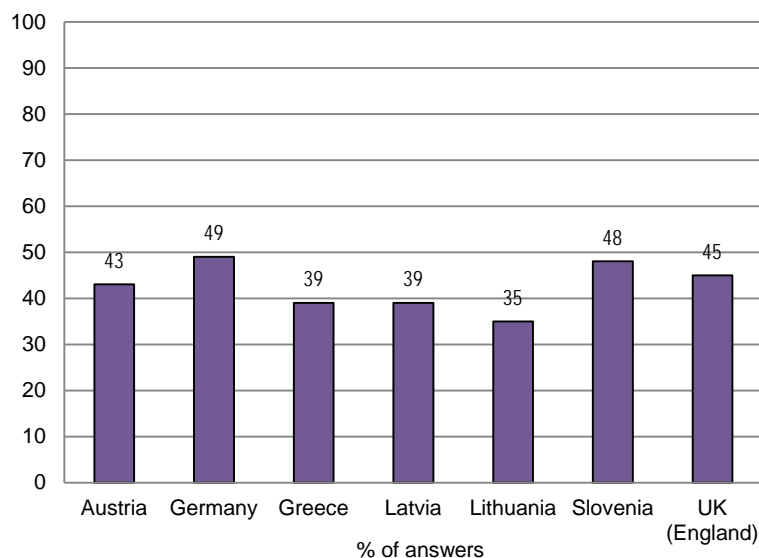
In the next part, we examine students' drivers for continuing further education.

5.4 Further education

Vocational programmes can lead to immediate employment or to further education. In this research, we are interested in the intentions of students to continue their education as well as their objectives in relation to work. Deciding to continue education can greatly increase the value of the vocational education for the learner, so it is worthwhile to try to understand which factors influence this choice and whether this choice is associated with other factors.

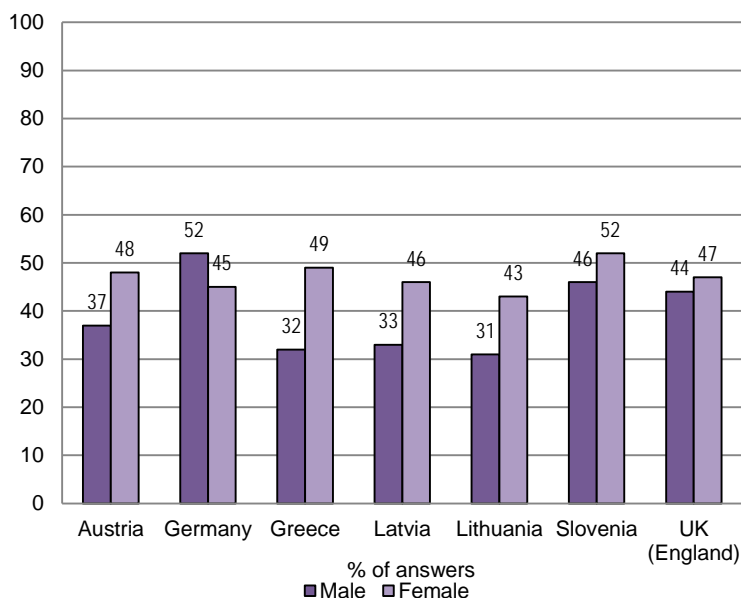
Despite the large differences in VET systems across the countries, including variations in the formal permeability paths, the share of learners who said they were likely to continue in school or further education were not as big as one might assume. Results ranged from a high of 49 percent in Germany down to 35 percent in Lithuania (see Chart 5.7). Females were more likely (by more than 10 percent) to expect to continue in all countries except Germany, where the situation is reversed. However, this association was not significant in Slovenia and the UK (see Chart 5.8).

Chart 5.7: Percentage of VET students considering continuing schooling, by country¹⁹



Question: D6 Do you plan to continue schooling or further education after your programme has ended (for example doing a specialised programme)? Presented answers 4 and 5 on a scale from 1="Definitely not" to 5="Definitely"

Chart 5.8: Percentage of VET students considering continuing schooling, by country and gender



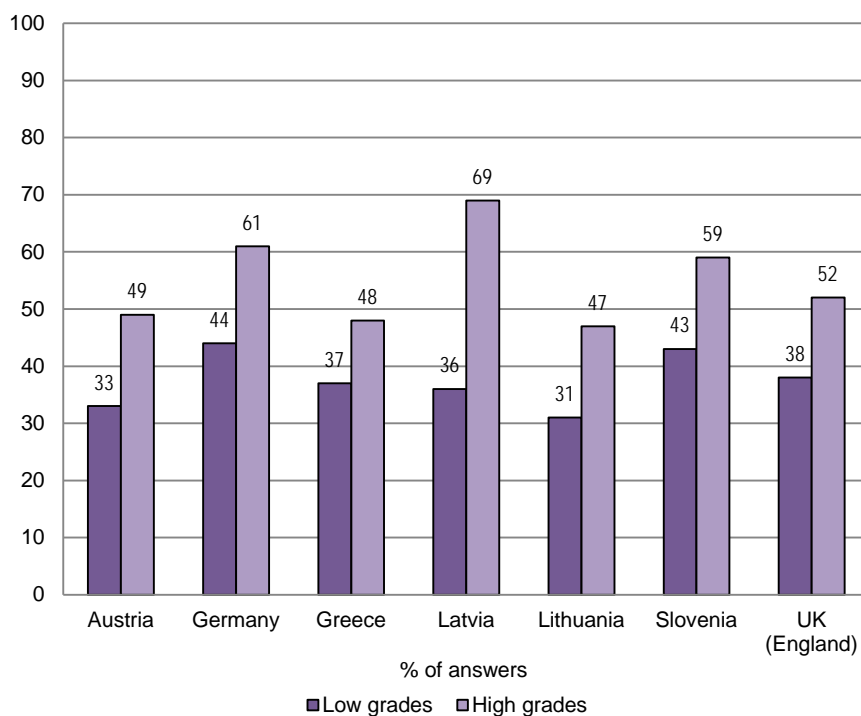
Question: D6 Do you plan to continue schooling or further education after your programme has ended (for example doing a specialised programme)? Presented answers 4 and 5 on a scale from 1="Definitely not" to 5="Definitely"

¹⁹Ranks and percentage points are indicated

In Austria, Greece, Lithuania and Latvia, students in programmes associated with employment in services were more likely to expect to continue their education than those in programmes associated with employment in industry. This relationship did not hold in the other three countries. Learners taking more challenging programmes were more likely to expect to continue their education than those taking less challenging programmes in Austria, Germany, Slovenia and the UK. It seems possible that the differences among programmes – in terms of level, duration and status – in these countries will hold greater significance for learners than the differences in the other countries.^{xvii}

The relationship between current perceived grades and intentions was more pervasive. At least 11 percent more students with high grades plan to continue education than their peers with low grades. The highest difference is noticed in Latvia (33 percent) and the lowest in Greece (11 percent), with other countries not far away with differences of approximately 16 percent.

Chart 5.9: Percentage of VET students who consider to continue schooling, by country and school success



Question: D6 Do you plan to continue schooling or further education after your programme has ended (for example doing a specialised programme)? Presented answers 4 and 5 on a scale from 1="Definitely not" to 5="Definitely"

In every country, except the UK, there was a significant relationship between socio-economic status and the intention to continue education: learners with an above-average socio-economic status were more

likely to plan to continue their education than those with a low socio-economic background, where these differences are quite high in Austria (29 percent), Greece (29 percent) and Latvia (26 percent) and a little lower in Germany (17 percent), Slovenia (18 percent) and Lithuania (13 percent).^{xviii}

Our research also sought to understand what 17- and 18-year-olds expect to gain from further education. If we are to understand young people as agents making decisions, it will be helpful to discover which benefits they expect to obtain from their programmes. Students were invited to express their agreement with statements about how they would benefit from further education or training. The most strongly supported statements across the seven countries were that further education or training “enhanced career options” (72 percent), that it “gave me a good education or qualification” (71 percent) and that it enabled “me to earn a high income later in life” (71 percent). However, there were national differences, for example, Greek learners were less likely to agree with all of the statements about how further education would help them. These preferences demonstrate that the majority of learners expect multiple benefits from their vocational programmes: better careers, good education, a long-term payback in terms of income (see Table 5.5 below).

Table 5.5: Students’ main drivers for continuing education, by country (in percent)²⁰

	Austria	Germany	Greece	Latvia	Lithuania	Slovenia	UK (England)
Further education enables me to follow my professional interest	70	62	42	51	50	53	80
Further education enables me to gain a good qualification/education	84	83	44	71	61	65	84
Further education enables me to take on leadership role later on in life	70	69	39	64	43	56	69
Further education enables me to earn a high income later in life	82	80	56	69	62	64	85
Further education enables me to become an expert in my field	71	68	60	68	63	66	82
Further education enables me to enhance my career options	81	80	52	74	63	70	82
Further education enables me to postpone starting full-time work	30	26	33	44	32	38	46
Further education enables me to experience a pupil exchange programme	24	19	21	40	31	29	44
Further education enables me to fulfil my parents’ expectations	26	28	28	38	35	38	45

Question: D8 This is about your opinion regarding further education (e.g. advanced training or studying). To what extent do you agree with the statements below about undertaking further education (or participating in further training)? Presented answers 4 and 5 on a scale from 1=“Not at all” to 5=“Completely”

Following professional interest was as the main driver of further education most often chosen by students from the UK (80 percent) and Austria (70 percent), while it was least often chosen in Greece (42 percent). That further education enables one to gain a good qualification most often is believed by students in the UK, Austria and Germany (84 percent) and again the least often in Greece (44 percent). In

²⁰Ranks and percentage points are indicated

Greece, students most often believe that further education enables them to become experts in the field (60 percent), which is still the lowest percentage among the countries. That further education enables a high income and the enhancement of a career is believed in all seven countries (above 50 percent), with the highest results in Austria, Germany and the UK (above 80 percent) and the lowest in Greece. In all seven countries, most students do not decide on further education because they want to postpone starting full-time work, to experience a pupil exchange programme or to fulfil their parents' expectations (all three less than 50 percent).

Gender was also associated with judgements about the benefits of further education (see Table 5.6). Female students in Austria, Greece, Lithuania, Latvia and the UK were more likely than males to believe that they were enhancing their career options through further education; however, in Germany the association was reversed. Austrian, Latvian, Lithuanian and Slovenian female students also agree to a higher extent than male students with the statement that further education will enable them to follow their personal interest. Female students in Austria, Germany, Greece and both Baltic countries also more often believe that further education will enable them to gain a good qualification. Male students in Austria, Germany, Latvia, Lithuania and Slovenia are also less often than females driven by the assumption that further education will enable them to experience a pupil exchange programme. In general, female students more often agreed with the mentioned drivers of further education.

Students taking a programme related to employment in services were more likely to judge that further education provides a 'good qualification or education' than those taking a programme related to employment in industry. Other statements were similarly influenced in only some countries or not significantly influenced at all by the employment or programme sector^{xix}. Further, students that reported high grades (in all countries) were more likely to agree with statements about their benefits from further education than those with low grades (see Table 5.7).

In particular, high-achieving learners in all countries were more likely to believe that further education would enable them to follow their professional interest, gain a good qualification/education and become an expert. In the UK, Austria, Slovenia, Lithuania and Greece students with high grades rated the motivational driver of further education enabling them to take on a leadership role later on in life higher than those with low grades. Similar is seen with the belief that further education will enable them to earn a high income later in life, which is more often believed by students with high grades in Austria, Greece and Slovenia. Students with high grades in Slovenia, Lithuania, Latvia, Greece and Austria are also more often driven to continue their education because that would enable them to enhance their career options.

It is possible that the valuation of further education contributes to success by raising motivation, but it is also possible that students with good grades are encouraged by those grades to believe that, in the future, further benefits will flow to them.

5. Future Career Aspirations and Further Education

Table 5.6: Students' main drivers of continuing education, by country and gender (in percent)

	Austria	Germany	Greece	Latvia	Lithuania	Slovenia	UK (England)
<i>Male</i>							
Further education enables me to follow my professional interest	66	61	39	44	49	50	78
Further education enables me to gain a good qualification/education	80	81	40	67	56	64	84
Further education enables me to take on leadership role later on in life	69	70	37	62	41	56	69
Further education enables me to earn a high income later in life	81	82	56	69	61	66	85
Further education enables me to become an expert in my field	73	72	58	66	60	66	83
Further education enables me to enhance my career options	78	82	49	70	61	68	79
Further education enables me to postpone starting full-time work	32	28	32	43	33	41	43
Further education enables me to experience a pupil exchange programme	19	16	22	35	29	27	45
Further education enables me to fulfil my parents' expectations	27	29	30	43	38	40	48
<i>Female</i>							
Further education enables me to follow my professional interest	74	63	45	58	53	56	82
Further education enables me to gain a good qualification/education	88	86	51	75	68	66	87
Further education enables me to take on leadership role later on in life	71	68	42	66	47	56	68
Further education enables me to earn a high income later in life	82	78	56	70	63	61	86
Further education enables me to become an expert in my field	69	64	63	70	67	66	82
Further education enables me to enhance my career options	84	78	57	78	68	73	85
Further education enables me to postpone starting full-time work	28	25	35	44	30	34	50
Further education enables me to experience a pupil exchange programme	30	21	20	44	35	33	43
Further education enables me to fulfil my parents' expectations	26	27	24	32	29	36	42

Question: D8 This is about your opinion regarding further education (e.g. advanced training or studying). To what extent do you agree with the statements below about undertaking further education (or participating in further training)? Presented answers 4 and 5 on a scale from 1="Not at all" to 5="Completely"

Table 5.7: Students' main drivers of continuing education, by country and school success (in percent)

	Austria	Germany	Greece	Latvia	Lithuania	Slovenia	UK (England)
<i>Low grades</i>							
Further education enables me to follow my professional interest	63	60	39	48	49	45	76
Further education enables me to gain a good qualification/education	77	84	39	69	58	58	81
Further education enables me to take on leadership role later on in life	66	67	37	64	42	51	64
Further education enables me to earn a high income later in life	78	79	54	71	62	60	84
Further education enables me to become an expert in my field	66	66	56	67	61	61	79
Further education enables me to enhance my career options	74	79	47	74	62	67	80
Further education enables me to postpone starting full-time work	31	26	32	43	32	35	44
Further education enables me to experience a pupil exchange programme	23	19	21	39	29	24	41
Further education enables me to fulfil my parents' expectations	28	28	27	38	35	37	43
<i>High grades</i>							
Further education enables me to follow my professional interest	75	70	50	73	54	65	83
Further education enables me to gain a good qualification/education	89	90	55	85	71	77	88
Further education enables me to take on leadership role later on in life	73	73	45	72	48	65	74
Further education enables me to earn a high income later in life	84	81	63	73	63	70	87
Further education enables me to become an expert in my field	75	75	69	76	69	74	85
Further education enables me to enhance my career options	85	83	61	83	69	77	83
Further education enables me to postpone starting full-time work	29	26	37	50	33	41	48
Further education enables me to experience a pupil exchange programme	25	19	21	41	37	38	47
Further education enables me to fulfil my parents' expectations	25	24	32	36	34	40	48

Question: D8 This is about your opinion regarding further education (e.g. advanced training or studying). To what extent do you agree with the statements below about undertaking further education (or participating in further training)? Presented answers 4 and 5 on a scale from 1="Not at all" to 5="Completely"

Lastly, based on the regression model we looked at the most important drivers of continuing schooling assuming that in most countries formal permeability paths exist, even though there are variations in programme types' access and formal requirements that VET graduates need to meet in order to progress. We assume the key drivers are not only related to motives for further education, but also to professional goals, satisfaction with the programme, paid work and school success.

Table 5.8: Effects of selected characteristics on students' plans to continue schooling, by 7EU-VET countries²¹

	Austria	Germany	Greece	Latvia	Lithuania	Slovenia	UK (England)
	Std. Beta	Std. Beta	Std. Beta	Std. Beta	Std. Beta	Std. Beta	Std. Beta
Constant (Plans to continue schooling) (Beta)	0.240	-0.696	1.513	2.356	1.679	0.489	1.660
School success	0.196***	0.122***	0.044	0.177***	0.048	0.160***	0.013
Overall satisfaction with the programme	-0.010	0.068*	0.057	0.029	0.000	-0.043	0.017
Learning after school (more than 2 hours)	0.002	0.004	0.129***	0.038	0.077**	0.049	0.065
Undertaking paid work	0.004	0.056	-0.090**	-0.129***	-0.069**	-0.002	NA
<i>Professional motives</i>							
Receiving a high income	0.004	0.055	0.062	-0.058	0.051	0.160***	-0.031
Undertaking interesting work	0.070*	0.061	0.002	-0.028	0.094**	-0.002	0.025
Having satisfactory job	0.055	0.093**	0.057	0.091*	0.104*	-0.001	0.045
Having a good relationship colleagues	-0.119***	-0.085**	0.010	-0.048	-0.153***	0.011	-0.078
<i>Motives for further education</i>							
Following professional interest	0.192***	0.051	0.145**	0.094*	0.121***	0.040	0.267***
Gaining a good qualification	0.072	0.145***	0.164***	0.090	0.169***	0.106*	0.157**
Taking a leadership role in life	-0.004	0.084*	-0.113**	0.113**	0.047	-0.008	-0.077
Enhancing own career options	0.070*	0.062	0.020	0.049	-0.030	0.137**	-0.032
<i>Socio-demographics</i>							
Gender (male)	-0.022	0.132***	-0.085*	0.024	-0.076**	-0.055	0.041
Parents' primary and lower-secondary education	-0.008	-0.026	-0.071	0.006	-0.015	-0.006	NA
Parents tertiary education	0.110***	0.093**	0.095**	0.029	-0.004	0.023	NA
Living in a town or small city	-0.081*	-0.009	-0.044	-0.124***	0.008	-0.056	-0.018
Living in a country village or a farm	-0.056	0.045	-0.105**	-0.166***	-0.038	-0.112**	-0.020
Below average socio-economic status	-0.051	-0.038	-0.076*	-0.042	0.009	-0.070*	0.032
Above average socio-economic status	0.099***	-0.032	0.092**	0.031	0.123***	0.044	-0.047
Adjusted R Square	0.217	0.193	0.205	0.173	0.155	0.173	0.128

*** = $p < 0.01$; ** = $p < 0.05$; * = $p < 0.10$

As expected, in general the most important contribution to VET students continuing schooling are individual expectations from further education. In general, VET students who believe further education enables them to follow a professional interest and that it leads to good qualifications are more likely to continue with schooling. We confirmed this in almost all countries, except Slovenia. Moreover, in Austria we found that following a professional interest is more important than gaining good qualifications (e.g. better certificate), but the opposite is true for Germany. In Greece, Lithuania and the UK both dimensions are important.

²¹ In the model we also tested the effects of programme type, father's and mother's employment status. In the case of Germany, VET students in medium demanding programme types are more likely to have plans to continue schooling than those in less demanding programmes, while in the UK the situation is reversed as students from medium demanding programmes are less likely to continue with education. Only in Slovenia does the father's employment status have a positive effect on students' plans to continue schooling.

Further, only in Slovenia are those students whose professional goal is to receive a high income more likely to enrol in further education. In the other countries this extrinsic motive plays no role. In Austria, Germany and Lithuania, those who prioritise good relationships with colleagues are less likely to enrol in further education.

We also found that those students with higher school success are more likely to continuing schooling, which was found in Austria, Germany, Latvia and Slovenia. As indicated earlier in the chapter, one would expect students' positive experience with schooling to impact on positive attitudes to this type of learning. Surprisingly, as seen in Table 5.8, we found that satisfaction with the current programme has almost no impact on continuing schooling. This can be interpreted in two different ways: first, VET students might have a completely different perception of further schooling and, second, those satisfied with the programme are more likely to start working. However, as expected, doing paid work in Greece, Latvia and Lithuania has a negative impact on personal preferences for continuing schooling. In addition, in the case of Greece and Lithuania we found some evidence that more time spent on learning after school raises the probability of continuing with schooling, which was not the case in the other countries.

We found that socio-demographic characteristics had some relevance to a higher probability of considering schooling, but again as with other characteristics, there are variations from country to country. In most countries, we found some proof that in this age group females develop more positive attitudes to continuing schooling, although in the case of Germany it is the opposite. As anticipated by theory, a higher level of parents' education had a positive impact on students' further schooling in Austria, Germany and Greece and, surprisingly, not in other countries. In some countries this can also be stated for socio-economic status. Parents' employment status has no impact on students' decisions to continue schooling, with the exception of Slovenia where fathers' full-time employment status had a positive effect on students' future enrolment. Lastly, in Austria, Greece, Latvia and Slovenia we found that coming from a less densely populated environment had a negative impact on continuing schooling.

5.5 Conclusions

In most EU (EU-27) countries, there are only small differences between VET and general education in the way people perceive employment options. In this context, the most important objectives for 17- and 18-year-old VET students across the seven countries are intrinsic, such as finding a job that makes them happy or having good relationships with colleagues. Female students usually rate happiness in their work, job security and good relationships with co-workers more highly than male learners. However, extrinsic objectives such as a high income or job security were also importantly stressed, in particular in Austria, Germany and the UK. In several countries, a higher socio-economic status is associated with a

stronger commitment to striving for occupational proficiency, but there are large differences here across the countries.

In general, the most desirable employment area among students is services (e.g. nursing, policing, hair-dressing), however in Austria or Germany industry is in second place and rates similarly as trade or public administration. The least popular area is non-governmental organisations in all seven countries. These preferences are very strongly related to gender and study programme types. In general, 37 percent of males as against 10 percent of females wanted to work in industry, while 53 percent of females as against 26 percent of males wanted to work in services.

Despite the large differences in VET systems across the countries, including variations in the formal permeability paths, the share of learners who said they were likely to continue in school or further education were not as large as one would assume: from 49 percent in Germany down to 35 percent in Lithuania. Important determinants of further learning are gender and school success: at least 11 percent more students with high grades plan to continue education than their peers with low grades.

The majority of learners expect multiple benefits from their vocational programmes: better careers, good education, a long-term payback in terms of income, and here it was not possible to identify any cross-country patterns. Nevertheless, the most important contributions to VET students for continuing schooling are school success and individual expectations from further education. In general, VET students who believe further education enables them to follow a professional interest and that it leads to good qualifications are more likely to continue schooling. In Austria and the UK, following a professional interest is more important than gaining good qualifications, but the opposite is true in Germany. Only in Slovenia are those students whose professional goal is to receive a high income more likely to enrol in further education. Undertaking paid work in Greece, Latvia and Lithuania has a negative impact on personal preferences for continuing schooling. Lastly, socio-demographic characteristics have a lower impact on preferences to continue schooling, as we would expect. A higher level of parents' education, for example, had a positive impact on students' desire for further schooling in Austria, Germany and Greece and, surprisingly, not in the other countries.

These findings clearly call for further investigation, particularly in relation to the formal permeability paths and types of further education.

6 CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF VET POLICIES

Vocational education and training (VET) systems in Europe prepare youth in different ways for short- and long-term careers. Variations between the systems importantly encompass several aspects, such as the ratio between the general and practical orientation of curricula, occupational specialisations, the organisation of apprenticeships, duration and programme requirements, tracking, certification and the permeability paths with post-secondary education. At the macro level, the distinctions impact particularly strongly on the VET system's segmentation (programme types), the ratio of young people enrolled in the VET system in comparison to general education and, in particular, the status and perception of systems in relation to the labour market.

On the basis of a large-scale survey among over 17,600 17- and 18-year-old VET students, this book looks at differences and similarities in seven EU countries: Austria, Germany, Greece, Latvia, Lithuania, Slovenia and the UK. In times of an economic downturn and the growing flexibilisation of knowledge recognition processes, the conclusions presented in the following sections are for anyone interested in education, the labour market and especially the interrelation of both areas. They touch upon issues of under- and over-qualification, social inclusion, vertical and horizontal skill (mis)matches, various aspects of employability and vocational professionalism and professionalisation emerging from within (VET students) or from above (system requirements).

i) THE SURVEY RESULTS ON PERCEPTIONS OF THE VET SYSTEM IN 27 EU COUNTRIES PROVIDE AN IMPORTANT REFERENCE FRAMEWORK FOR FURTHER EXPLORATION OF THE VET POPULATION IN THE 7EU COUNTRIES

As expected, when looking at how the countries included in the 7EU-VET survey are positioned on the EU-27 scale (Eurobarometer Survey and Eurostat LFS), we encounter large differences among them – particularly in relation to the key national-level findings identified in this book.

Austria

The Austrian VET system is characterised by the highest enrolment ratio in comparison to general education, the highest reputation of the system and highly perceived quality learning and teachers' competencies among the 27 EU countries. As expected, most people in Austria believe (79 percent, the EU-27 average is 55 percent) that vocational training leads to jobs that are well paid and also the ratio of those considering that the VET system equips pupils with skills that are needed by employers is among the highest.

However, when looking at the share of people who believe that completing vocational education and training makes someone more likely to find a job in comparison to general or higher education, the percentage of Austrians (49 percent) is lower than the EU-27 average (55 percent) and this also applies to the share of those believing that VET enables people to continue with university studies afterwards. Among the surveyed countries, Austrian VET students have the highest share of lowly educated parents, but with a high socio-economic background and a full-time job. Here the VET population, more than in the other surveyed countries, comes from the countryside.

The main VET structures the 7EU-VET survey in Austria examined were VET Colleges (Berufsbildende Höhere Schulen), VET Schools (Berufsbildende Mittlere Schulen) and Dual apprenticeships (Duale Ausbildung).

Germany

Germany comes close to the EU-27 average proportions of students enrolled in vocational programmes and general programmes. Similar to Austria, in Germany the proportion of VET students with lowly educated parents is the largest, but at the same time they have an above-average socio-economic background and parents with a full-time job.

The reputation of the VET system in Germany is among the highest in the EU-27, and so is the perception of high-quality learning in the VET system which has similarities with Austria but, unlike Austria, the belief that vocational training leads to jobs that are well-paid and also the permeability to tertiary education is around the EU-27 average. Moreover, the perception that VET students acquire skills needed by employers ranks lower than in Austria. The belief that completing vocational education and training makes a person more likely to find a job position is below the EU-27 average in Germany which also has the highest percentage of the population aged 18 to 24 with at most a lower-secondary education without further education or training.

The main VET structures in the 7EU-VET survey in Austria were upper secondary schools with a vocational bias (Fachgymnasien or Berufliche Gymnasien), full-time vocational schools (Berufsfachschulen) and part-time vocational schools (Berufsschulen).

Greece

In Greece the proportion of students enrolled in vocational programmes at the upper secondary level of education in comparison to general education is (30.7 percent) significantly lower than the EU-27 average (50 percent). Among the 7EU-VET countries, Greece has the highest share of male students (64 percent), and the share of those enrolled in less demanding programmes (Epangelmatiki scholi, EPAS) is, unlike most of the 7EU-VET countries, higher than in more demanding programmes (Epangelmatiko lykeio, EPAL). In the 7EU-VET survey we found indications that programmes here are more related to industry than services compared with the other countries.

The reputation of VET programmes is above-average in Greece (75 percent) and is comparable with Ireland (76 percent) or Denmark (74 percent); however, there is less agreement that VET programmes

deliver high-quality learning in Greece than in the other countries. Surprisingly, also above the EU-27 average is the share of Greek people who believe the vocational training leads to jobs that are well-paid, while matching the EU-27 average are the perceptions that: (a) VET students acquire skills needed by employers; (b) completing VET makes a person more likely to find a job than someone who has completed general secondary or almost completed higher education and (c) VET enables people to continue with university studies afterwards.

The employment status of Greek VET students' parents ranks the country among the least prosperous: around 20 percent of the students' fathers have part-time or temporary employment and one out of four mothers are unemployed: only 37 percent of them have a full-time job.

Latvia

Latvia falls into the group of countries with the smallest enrolment proportion (36%) of VET students in comparison to general education (the EU-27 average is 49.9% versus 50.1%). The reputation of the VET system is 10 percentage points below the EU-27 average: also lower than the average is the perception that the VET system delivers high-quality learning and that completing vocational education and training makes a person more likely to find a job than someone who has completed general secondary or higher education. The share of respondents who believe that vocational training leads to jobs that are well-paid and delivers skills needed by employers matches the EU-27 average.

Latvia is one of the countries with the highest proportion of people agreeing that VET enables people to continue with university studies afterwards and can in this regard be compared to Estonia, Bulgaria or Cyprus. The VET structures considered in the 7EU-VET survey were three types of vocational schools: *arodvidusskola*, *arodskoarodskola* (vocational school) and *profesionala vidusskola* (vocational upper secondary school).

Lithuania

With six different types of VET schools²², along with Hungary and Cyprus Lithuania falls into the group of countries with the lowest VET enrolment rates (27.7%) in the EU-27. According to the 7EU-VET data, the system is characterised by a male population which is oriented more towards industry than services. The reputation of VET programmes, and the belief that VET education delivers high-quality learning and equips students with skills needed by employers are lower in Lithuania than in the other EU-27 countries (64%).

While the share of respondents in the EU-27 believing that completing VET makes a person more likely to find a job than someone who has completed general education is around 56%, the results for Lithuania are well below-average (31%) and only comparable with Ireland (30%). As expected, the share of people believing VET leads to jobs that are well-paid is also below the EU-27 average. However, based

²² Aukštesniojo ir aukštojo išsilavinimo nesuteikiantis povidurinis mokymas; Pirminio profesinio mokymo programos, skirtos asmenims, turintiems vidurinį išsilavinimą; Pirminio profesinio mokymo programos, turintiems pagrindinį išsilavinimą; Pirminio profesinio mokymo programos, turintiems pagrindinį išsilavinimą, ir suteikiančios galimybę įgyti vidurinį išsilavinimą; Pirminio profesinio mokymo programos, neturintiems pagrindinio išsilavinimo and Pirminio profesinio mokymo programos, neturintiems pagrindinio išsilavinimo, bet suteikiančios galimybę jį įgyti.

on the 7EU VET survey the proportion of those who believe that VET enables people to continue with university studies afterwards is above the EU-27 average in Lithuania.

In Lithuania, the share of parents with a high level of education is larger than in other countries. However, the 7EU VET survey results show this country is characterised by a surprisingly high share of unemployed fathers (19%). Similar to some other countries, around 20% of the students' fathers have part-time or temporary employment with a significant share of unemployed mothers (20%).

Slovenia

Even though enrolment figures for the VET system are decreasing in Slovenia, the proportion between VET education and general education is still above the EU-27 average, indicating that more young people are enrolling in the VET system or vocationally-oriented general education. A significantly higher proportion (2:1) is enrolled in four-year Technical Upper Secondary Education and Training (Srednje poklicno-tehniško izobraževanje) than three-year Vocational Upper Secondary Education and Training (Srednje poklicno izobraževanje). From the international comparative perspective, the Slovenian VET system is characterised by the lowest reputation among all EU-27 countries: in this country only every second person believes VET has a negative image (the average is 71%). As expected, also low is the share of people who believe that VET provides high-quality learning (64%), compared to the EU-27 average (75%).

Slovenia is the exception when we consider the belief that vocational training leads to jobs that are well-paid with only 36% of people agreeing and 60% (the most in the EU-27) of people disagreeing with that statement. A similar rank is also attained for the belief that VET provides students with skills that are needed by employers. Therefore, there is a surprising above-average share of people (60%) believing that completing vocational education and training makes a person more likely to find a job than someone who has completed general secondary or higher education. The level of agreement in Slovenia (65%) about VET enabling people to continue with university studies afterwards is below the EU-27 average.

The UK (England)

The VET system in the UK is very oriented to the labour market; however, there are large differences among the four programme types considered in the 7EU VET survey: "Level 3 programmes", two-year programmes give access to HE, a professional chef diploma and Level 1 or 2 programmes (English QCF). The UK is among the countries that experience one of the lowest proportions (32.1%) of VET enrolments (with more than 89% coming from cities, which is the highest share among the 7EU VET countries).

The reputation of VET programmes in the UK is close to the EU-27 average and so is the belief that the system offers high-quality learning, whereas "VET students acquire skills needed by employers" and "VET leads to jobs which are well-paid" were marked by a large number of people answering "I do not know". Also at the average EU-27 level is the perception that completing vocational education and

training makes a person more likely to find a job. Less than three out of four people believe that VET enables people to continue with university studies afterwards.

As can be seen from the data presented above, there are significant differences across the VET systems in terms of how they prepare their students for their careers. In the following sections we look more closely at the cross-country differences and similarities.

ii) TRANSITION FROM EARLIER EDUCATION TO VET: THE KEY FACTORS AFFECTING THE TRANSITION TO VET ARE THE SAME IN ALL OF THE SURVEYED COUNTRIES – THEY ARE ALL ARE CLOSELY LINKED TO THE PERCEIVED BELIEF OF CAREER DEVELOPMENT

From the viewpoint of VET students, three key factors affect the transition to VET from earlier education. These are: (a) an appealing occupational programme; (b) good job prospects; and (c) established bases for further education. The least important factors are the support and advice of former teachers, and low grades. In the survey we found some evidence that the higher socio-economic status of a student's family positively affects occupational choice based on own interest. In Austria and Germany, students with lower grades are more likely to believe they were influenced by a friend's programme, while the importance of peers in Latvia and Greece is influenced by socio-economic status. Parents' education did not account for any difference with regard to perceived decision-making factors.

When making a decision on the transition to VET, the most important information source for learners in all the countries was parents and family members. Also highly assessed in all countries was online information, while in Austria, Latvia and Slovenia informative days were also highly assessed. Teachers were considered an important information source only in the UK, while information sources were not perceived to be important in any of the studied countries. These results indicate *there is a need to increase the centrality of objective information sources related to enrolment in VET, which includes training teachers in this direction and presenting the possible effects of considering other information sources. Career guidance activities have significant room for improvement in most of the countries.*

Across the countries VET students consider surprisingly limited options regarding the choice of a further occupational path

The majority of VET students, in general three out of four, did not consider any alternative in their decision related to enrolling in a VET programme. In the survey we found some evidence that parents' education affects the breadth of choice but there are large differences among the countries: in Slovenia a lower level of parents' education has a positive effect of a wider choice which means VET students are freer in their decisions, while the situation in Lithuania is the reverse. In some countries, VET students with a lower socio-economic status considered fewer alternatives when selecting their education. *In most countries and on the EU level, there is a need to assess the appropriateness of presenting a broader range of different programme options while paying particular attention to students with a weaker social background. We can say that in the transition into VET pupils should be alert to alternative options, particularly in the event they have a dream vocational path.*

iii) ACQUIRED COMPETENCIES: VET STUDENTS GENERALLY PERCEIVED TEAM WORK AND THE ABILITY TO FAMILIARISE THEMSELVES WITH NEW TASKS RELATED TO OCCUPATIONS AS THE MOST DEVELOPED COMPETENCIES OF VET LEARNERS

Our results reveal large differences across the countries in the way learners assess their own level of acquired competencies. The development of generic competencies was relatively strong in Germany, Austria and the UK. One of the least developed competencies is the ability to perform well under pressure.

Across all the countries, girls were more likely than boys to report a high level of generic competencies, in particular: being able to manage occupational tasks independently, being able to work as a team member, being able to quickly familiarise myself with new tasks related to job occupations, and being able to communicate ideas and suggestions to others clearly. In addition, learners following programmes related to services were generally more likely to report good generic competencies of the following kind: managing occupational tasks independently. In general, across the countries the socio-economic status of the students' families does not seem to be associated with their reported capability in terms of generic competencies.

The most important determinant of the ability to conduct independent work is school success and professional motives

In most countries, learners with better grades and those who in the longer term are driven by inspiration to acquire solid occupation professional skills will, according to the data of our survey, be able to work more independently. The opportunity to learn new things impacts the ability for responsible work only in Germany and Greece. One can speculate that the perception of VET students of performing vocational tasks is related to the learning environment in schools only to a limited extent.

As expected, across the countries students with higher grades were more likely to report they had good generic competencies than those with lower grades

However, there are some interesting differences among the countries. In Austria, students with higher grades have, according to the self-assessment approach, better developed all of the surveyed competencies (managing occupational tasks independently, team work, learning competencies, performing under pressure), except communication skills. In Germany, differences among learners with good and bad grades were only found between managing occupational tasks independently and working under pressure. With minor variations, in Greece, Latvia and Lithuania differences were only found between independent occupational performance, learning abilities and communication. In Slovenia, differences were found in all the surveyed competencies except communication skills, while in the UK a relationship between school success and acquired competencies was found in the case of all learning competencies. Surveying the relationship between school success and acquired competencies raises one of the most important issues of the development of VET systems. *The countries should establish a clear understanding of which competencies are reflected in assessment procedures and which are not. However,*

the relationship considered could also be reversed, assuming that generic competencies help to explain the success of learners because they are competencies that are employed in learning as well as in work.

iv) FUTURE CAREER ASPIRATIONS: PERSONAL MOTIVES ARE MORE IMPORTANT FOR VET LEARNERS IN THEIR FUTURE CAREERS THAN SALARY, JOB SECURITY OR REPUTATION

The employment sectors where learners most aspired to work are services. Industry, trade and other sectors attracted less interest with some noticeable difference across the countries. The most important driver of a professional career for VET students is finding a job that makes them happy and having a good relationship with one's colleagues. In Austria and Germany another particular motive was job security, and in Slovenia "having enough spare time to do other things in life". In the UK, learning opportunities and a high income were seen as particularly important. *VET systems should make learners aware of employment and employability possibilities.*

For some VET learners the next step in their career is to enrol in further education

Despite the large differences in the VET systems' permeability paths, the share of learners who said they were likely to continue in school or further education were not as large as one might assume: the results ranged from 49% in Germany to 35% in Lithuania. Females (by more than 10%) were more likely to expect to continue in all countries except Germany, where the situation is reversed. The most strongly supported statements across the seven countries were related to the enhancement of career options, attaining a good education or qualification and possibility earning a higher income. Learners with an above-average socio-economic background, those who are on services-related paths and those with better grades were more likely to plan the continuation of their education. The relationship between parents' education and plans for continuing learning were, surprisingly, only found in some countries.

v) TOWARDS THE POLICY DEVELOPMENT IN VET

Even though we should stress the need for highly diversified policy recommendations and national adaptations, we can arrive at some universal conclusions by stating there is a need to gain a deeper understanding of the link between curricular processes and acquired competencies. At present, modernisation of the VET system is understood in many countries as programme modularisation and implementation of the learning outcome approach. In many cases this is accompanied by the question of whether systems are based on the proper number of programmes, and on what bases specialisations depend. The question of VET's fusion with general education and permeability between VET schools and higher education is particularly sensitive. In relation to this, there is a lot of discussion in the EU about how VET can raise its status and reputation, which in many countries is based on one side on the problem of the falling enrolments in VET institutions and at the same time on the increasing need for ready-made skills.

These concerns are partially reflected in the Europe 2020 Strategy by interrelated flagship initiatives such as Youth on the Move (improvements in education and job mobility), the Agenda for new skills

and jobs (improvements in educational and job matching) and the Digital agenda for Europe (improvements in accessibility and usability of ICT skills). These directions are also related to expected improvements in the quality and efficiency of education and training and the promotion of equity, social cohesion and active citizenship, reducing drop outs and, generally speaking, improvements in the quality, attractiveness and accessibility of learning opportunities.

The 7EU-VET project analysed these goals in particular through the policy framework of the Copenhagen Process and Bruges Communiqué (2010). These documents anticipate that future developments in VET will be particularly related by enhancing its attractiveness, quality and performance, transparency, established information and guidance systems, recognition of competencies and qualifications. Building on this, this book has explored VET systems from the perspective of VET learners and their reflections on primary education, higher education and the labour market.

The key EU tools currently on the agenda in the EU are the European qualification framework (EQF), the European credit system for VET (ECVET), the European quality assurance framework for VET (EQAVET), and Europass. As part of policy developments it would be vital to forge a strong link between these tools and the findings and questions generated in this book.

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APPENDIX

Appendix 1: Descriptors for less and more demanding programmes for each country

Country/Category	Less demanding programmes	More demanding programmes
Austria	Dual apprenticeships, VET schools	VET colleges (5-year)
Germany	Part-time vocational schools (Berufsschulen)	Full-time vocational schools (Berufsfachschulen), upper secondary school with vocational bias (Fachgymnasien or Berufliche Gymnasien)
Greece	Vocational schools (EPAS)	Vocational lyceums (EPAL)
Latvia	Theoretical and practical training in vocational school (Arodskola)	Higher theoretical preparedness and professional skill accrued in vocational secondary school (Arovidusskola)
Lithuania	<p>Pirminio profesinio mokymo programos, neturintiems pagrindinio išsilavinimo;</p> <p>Pirminio profesinio mokymo programos, neturintiems pagrindinio išsilavinimo, bet suteikiančios galimybę jį įgyti;</p> <p>Pirminio profesinio mokymo programos, turintiems pagrindinį išsilavinimą;</p> <p>Pirminio profesinio mokymo programos, turintiems pagrindinį išsilavinimą, ir suteikiančios galimybę įgyti vidurinį išsilavinimą</p>	<p>Aukštesniojo ir aukštojo išsilavinimo nesuteikiantis povidurinis mokymas;</p> <p>Pirminio profesinio mokymo programos, skirtos asmenims, turintiems vidurinį išsilavinimą</p>
Slovenia	Secondary vocational education (3-year)	Secondary technical education (4-year)
UK	Level 1 or 2 programmes, professional chefs diploma	2-year programmes give access to HE, level 3 programmes

Source: 7EU VET Project: <http://www.7eu-vet.org/>

ENDNOTES

ⁱ Table: Students' place of birth, by country in percentage.

	Austria	Germany	Greece	Latvia	Lithuania	Slovenia	UK (England)
In own country	96	96	84	99	98	96	95
In other country	4	4	16	1	2	4	5

Question: G3a Where were you born?

ⁱⁱ Table: Percentage of students enrolled in industry and service sector programmes, by country.

	Austria	Germany	Greece	Latvia	Lithuania	Slovenia	UK (England)
Industry	42	31	56	34	56	42	5
Service	58	69	44	66	44	58	95

Question: B2a What is the title of the programme you are enrolled on?

ⁱⁱⁱ Table: Percentages of at least one of parents born in other country, by country and socio-economic status.

	Austria	Germany	Greece	Latvia	Lithuania	Slovenia	UK (England)
<i>Parents in country</i>							
Below average	15	13	39	28	27	18	8
Average	56	57	53	58	61	60	75
Above average	29	30	7	14	11	22	17
<i>Parents other country</i>							
Below average	13	22	44	33	29	30	10
Average	68	61	49	52	52	52	63
Above average	19	16	7	15	19	18	27

Question: G14. Which of the description below comes closest to how you feel about your family's income?

iv *Table: Parents' employment status by country in percentage.*

	Austria	Germany	Greece	Latvia	Lithuania	Slovenia	UK (England)
<i>Below average (Father employment)</i>							
Full-time	83	79	66	66	51	77	78
Part-time/temporarily	7	12	28	24	27	11	14
Not employed	10	9	7	9	22	11	9
<i>Below average (Mother employment)</i>							
Full-time	45	42	34	62	43	74	59
Part-time/temporarily	35	42	43	20	26	12	25
Not employed	20	15	23	18	31	14	16
<i>Average (Father employment)</i>							
Full-time	90	88	72	73	60	80	75
Part-time/temporarily	6	6	17	18	23	8	10
Not employed	4	6	11	8	17	12	15
<i>Average (Mother employment)</i>							
Full-time	48	40	39	70	52	72	48
Part-time/temporarily	36	43	31	15	23	11	24
Not employed	16	17	29	15	25	18	28
<i>Above average (Father employment)</i>							
Full-time	90	91	80	83	68	84	87
Part-time/temporarily	3	5	12	8	20	10	4
Not employed	7	4	8	9	11	6	9
<i>Above average (Mother employment)</i>							
Full-time	51	37	51	76	61	84	58
Part-time/temporarily	35	48	20	9	25	6	25
Not employed	14	15	29	15	14	10	16

Question: G9 What is the employment status of your parents?

^v Table: Parents' employment status, by country and parents' education

	Austria	Germany	Greece	Latvia	Lithuania	Slovenia
<i>High education parents (Father employment)</i>						
Full-time	88	90	78	78	64	78
Part-time/temporarily	8	6	16	17	23	12
Not employed	4	4	6	5	12	10
<i>High education parents (Mother employment)</i>						
Full-time	56	40	44	73	59	79
Part-time/temporarily	34	47	38	18	23	12
Not employed	10	13	18	9	18	9
<i>Low education parents (Father employment)</i>						
Full-time	89	88	63	69	53	80
Part-time/temporarily	5	7	26	20	23	9
Not employed	6	5	11	11	24	12
<i>Low education parents (Mother employment)</i>						
Full-time	46	41	34	63	44	72
Part-time/temporarily	37	44	36	17	24	11
Not employed	17	15	30	20	32	17

Question: G8 What is the 'highest level of schooling' completed by your father / mother?

^{vi} *Table: Factors affecting students' decision making about the programme, by countries and socio-economic status in percentage.*

	Austria	Germany	Greece	Latvia	Lithuania	Slovenia	UK (England)
<i>Below average SES</i>							
The programme offered good job prospects	<u>77</u>	<u>55</u>	<u>36</u>	<u>52</u>	<u>30</u>	<u>44</u>	<u>66</u>
My previous examination grades prevented me being able to enrol on more preferable programmes	4	8	9	13	10	10	14
My parents suggested I enrol on this programme	13	11	12	19	12	7	22
The occupation(s) related to the programme appealed to me	<u>71</u>	<u>70</u>	<u>30</u>	36	<u>43</u>	<u>54</u>	<u>63</u>
The programme provides a good foundation for further qualifications / education	<u>82</u>	<u>77</u>	<u>47</u>	<u>52</u>	<u>47</u>	<u>50</u>	<u>66</u>
My friends have chosen to undertake the same programme	22	17	28	<u>26</u>	16	10	18
The reputation of the programme was attractive to me	46	39	27	31	27	28	57
Former teachers encouraged me to enrol on this programme	9	13	13	6	6	6	29
This programme was the most appropriate within a reasonable distance from my home	43	36	16	<u>40</u>	20	18	54
<i>Average SES</i>							
The programme offered good job prospects	<u>81</u>	<u>63</u>	<u>30</u>	<u>52</u>	<u>35</u>	<u>46</u>	<u>73</u>
My previous examination grades prevented me being able to enrol on more preferable programmes	3	8	7	10	9	6	13
My parents suggested I enrol on this programme	13	13	11	20	15	11	14
The occupation(s) related to the programme appealed to me	<u>71</u>	<u>73</u>	<u>30</u>	<u>39</u>	<u>48</u>	<u>59</u>	<u>75</u>
The programme provides a good foundation for further qualifications / education	<u>85</u>	<u>79</u>	<u>52</u>	<u>57</u>	<u>54</u>	<u>55</u>	<u>74</u>
My friends have chosen to undertake the same programme	20	16	27	<u>18</u>	18	9	13
The reputation of the programme was attractive to me	50	43	28	33	30	23	60
Former teachers encouraged me to enrol on this programme	6	14	13	6	6	5	17
This programme was the most appropriate within a reasonable distance from my home	36	36	15	35	19	21	54
<i>Above average SES</i>							
The programme offered good job prospects	<u>80</u>	<u>67</u>	<u>34</u>	<u>53</u>	<u>40</u>	<u>44</u>	<u>71</u>
My previous examination grades prevented me being able to enrol on more preferable programmes	2	6	6	7	9	5	12
My parents suggested I enrol on this programme	17	11	11	15	16	9	15
The occupation(s) related to the programme appealed to me	<u>69</u>	<u>75</u>	<u>39</u>	<u>38</u>	<u>35</u>	<u>59</u>	<u>80</u>
The programme provides a good foundation for further qualifications / education	<u>84</u>	<u>84</u>	<u>52</u>	<u>57</u>	<u>62</u>	<u>58</u>	<u>72</u>
My friends have chosen to undertake the same programme	18	17	12	<u>17</u>	15	9	12
The reputation of the programme was attractive to me	45	38	21	31	29	21	67
Former teachers encouraged me to enrol on this programme	9	14	12	5	6	3	20
This programme was the most appropriate within a reasonable distance from my home	36	34	15	<u>38</u>	14	15	48

Question: A4 How important were the following aspects to you when you were choosing your current programme? Presented answers 4 and 5 on a scale from 1="Not at all" to 5="Very"

vii *Table: Factors affecting students' decision making about the programme, by countries and school success in percentage.*

	Austria	Germany	Greece	Latvia	Lithuania	Slovenia	UK (England)
<i>Low grades</i>							
The programme offered good job prospects	76	62	29	54	31	44	63
My previous examination grades prevented me being able to enrol on more preferable programmes	3	9	9	11	10	8	13
My parents suggested I enrol on this programme	17	13	11	20	13	11	15
The occupation(s) related to the programme appealed to me	67	68	30	38	43	55	66
The programme provides a good foundation for further qualifications / education	83	77	44	55	49	54	66
My friends have chosen to undertake the same programme	26	19	28	21	16	9	15
The reputation of the programme was attractive to me	49	41	28	30	27	24	57
Former teachers encouraged me to enrol on this programme	8	12	11	6	5	5	18
This programme was the most appropriate within a reasonable distance from my home	37	37	14	36	18	20	49
<i>High grades</i>							
The programme offered good job prospects	80	70	39	55	38	47	77
My previous examination grades prevented me being able to enrol on more preferable programmes	3	4	6	6	6	6	13
My parents suggested I enrol on this programme	11	10	14	13	15	10	14
The occupation(s) related to the programme appealed to me	74	77	38	49	45	60	78
The programme provides a good foundation for further qualifications / education	85	80	56	63	54	59	74
My friends have chosen to undertake the same programme	18	13	25	19	15	9	12
The reputation of the programme was attractive to me	48	39	27	48	31	25	61
Former teachers encouraged me to enrol on this programme	7	13	17	9	5	5	20
This programme was the most appropriate within a reasonable distance from my home	35	36	16	31	17	17	54

Question: A4 How important were the following aspects to you when you were choosing your current programme? Presented answers 4 and 5 on a scale from 1="Not at all" to 5="Very"

viii *Table: Importance of 'My friends have chosen to undertake the same programme', by country and school success in percentage.*

	Austria	Germany	Greece	Latvia	Lithuania	Slovenia	UK (England)
Low grades	26	19	28	21	16	9	15
High grades	18	13	25	19	15	9	12

Question: A4_6 How important were the following aspects to you when you were choosing your current programme? My friends have chosen to undertake the same programme. Presented answers 4 and 5 on a scale from 1="Not at all" to 5="Very"

Table: Importance of 'My friends have chosen to undertake the same programme', by country and socio-economic status in percentage.

	Austria	Germany	Greece	Latvia	Lithuania	Slovenia	UK (England)
Below average	22	17	28	26	16	10	18
Average	20	16	27	18	18	9	13
Above average	18	17	12	17	15	9	12

Question: A4_6 How important were the following aspects to you when you were choosing your current programme? My friends have chosen to undertake the same programme. Presented answers 4 and 5 on a scale from 1="Not at all" to 5="Very"

ix Table: Factors affecting students' decision making about the programme, by countries and parents' education in percentage.

	Austria	Germany	Greece	Latvia	Lithuania	Slovenia
<i>High education parents</i>						
The programme offered good job prospects	80	63	27	51	35	44
My previous examination grades prevented me being able to enrol on more preferable programmes	1	6	9	12	9	6
My parents suggested I enrol on this programme	13	17	14	19	17	12
The occupation(s) related to the programme appealed to me	67	67	27	43	46	55
The programme provides a good foundation for further qualifications / education	83	80	45	57	56	55
My friends have chosen to undertake the same programme	23	18	29	21	18	13
The reputation of the programme was attractive to me	44	35	24	33	31	22
Former teachers encouraged me to enrol on this programme	8	13	12	6	6	3
This programme was the most appropriate within a reasonable distance from my home	33	32	17	34	18	21
<i>Low education parents</i>						
The programme offered good job prospects	81	66	33	54	34	45
My previous examination grades prevented me being able to enrol on more preferable programmes	3	7	7	11	8	7
My parents suggested I enrol on this programme	13	10	11	22	11	11
The occupation(s) related to the programme appealed to me	73	75	34	38	44	57
The programme provides a good foundation for further qualifications / education	86	80	50	56	49	56
My friends have chosen to undertake the same programme	19	17	26	21	16	8
The reputation of the programme was attractive to me	49	44	29	33	28	23
Former teachers encouraged me to enrol on this programme	7	12	11	7	4	6
This programme was the most appropriate within a reasonable distance from my home	37	38	14	39	17	18

Question: A4 How important were the following aspects to you when you were choosing your current programme? Presented answers 4 and 5 on a scale from 1="Not at all" to 5="Very"

^x Table: Information sources students used when deciding for programme by country and type of programme in percentage.

	Austria	Germany	Greece	Latvia	Lithuania	Slovenia	UK (England)
<i>Less demanding</i>							
Teachers	7	7	<u>17</u>	17	6	8	<u>21</u>
Parents or family members	<u>42</u>	<u>41</u>	<u>22</u>	<u>30</u>	<u>18</u>	<u>24</u>	<u>27</u>
Friends or classmates	17	14	<u>21</u>	22	<u>12</u>	9	<u>28</u>
Job centre	10	17	8	10	4	9	5
Informative days / fair / open days at school	24	21	8	<u>33</u>	<u>12</u>	<u>33</u>	11
Online information and/or other public media (e.g. newspapers)	<u>26</u>	<u>43</u>	16	<u>26</u>	<u>24</u>	15	14
An aptitude test offered by an educational establishment	13	5	5	20	7	12	15
A previous internship or work placement (not asked in Slo)	<u>40</u>	<u>60</u>	16	13	6	NA	12
School counsellors or career advisors (not asked in Aus and Ger)	NA	NA	<u>17</u>	<u>16</u>	7	<u>17</u>	<u>21</u>
<i>More demanding</i>							
Teachers	9	17	18	12	5	7	<u>41</u>
Parents or family members	<u>38</u>	<u>39</u>	<u>23</u>	<u>29</u>	<u>19</u>	<u>21</u>	<u>32</u>
Friends or classmates	24	25	<u>22</u>	20	<u>10</u>	14	20
Job centre	2	12	9	8	3	6	4
Informative days / fair / open days at school	<u>65</u>	31	9	<u>26</u>	8	<u>41</u>	<u>28</u>
Online information and/or other public media (e.g. newspapers)	<u>29</u>	<u>34</u>	16	<u>27</u>	<u>20</u>	<u>23</u>	27
An aptitude test offered by an educational establishment	15	6	11	15	9	10	13
A previous internship or work placement (not asked in Slo)	3	<u>33</u>	<u>19</u>	12	5	NA	13
School counsellors or career advisors (not asked in Aus and Ger)	NA	NA	<u>19</u>	<u>9</u>	5	13	20

Question: A5 How important were the following information sources when you were choosing your current programme? Presented answers 4 and 5 on a scale from 1="Not at all" to 5="Very"

^{xi} *Table: Percentage of VET students who acquired certain competence to a large extent, by country and parents' education – no data for UK*

	Austria	Germany	Greece	Latvia	Lithuania	Slovenia
<i>Students with high education parents</i>						
Being able to manage occupational tasks independently	<u>79</u>	<u>80</u>	42	51	54	56
Being able to work as a team member	<u>84</u>	<u>86</u>	50	<u>63</u>	<u>66</u>	<u>73</u>
Being able to quickly familiarise myself with new tasks related to job occupations	<u>76</u>	<u>78</u>	<u>51</u>	<u>59</u>	<u>61</u>	62
Being able to perform well under pressure	73	68	47	44	52	48
Being able to communicate ideas and suggestions to others clearly	72	67	<u>52</u>	57	59	<u>63</u>
Being able to approach and engage with others with confidence (e.g. networking)	<u>76</u>	70	<u>56</u>	<u>61</u>	<u>64</u>	<u>67</u>
<i>Students low education parents</i>						
Being able to manage occupational tasks independently	<u>80</u>	<u>84</u>	48	51	53	<u>56</u>
Being able to work as a team member	<u>88</u>	<u>90</u>	<u>55</u>	<u>65</u>	<u>67</u>	<u>71</u>
Being able to quickly familiarise myself with new tasks related to job occupations	<u>77</u>	<u>78</u>	<u>58</u>	<u>55</u>	<u>60</u>	<u>61</u>
Being able to perform well under pressure	71	71	47	38	43	44
Being able to communicate ideas and suggestions to others clearly	70	64	<u>55</u>	51	47	52
Being able to approach and engage with others with confidence (e.g. networking)	73	73	<u>57</u>	<u>58</u>	<u>57</u>	<u>56</u>

Question: E1a The following question asks for your perception of certain skills and abilities which are listed below. Please assess your current level of these abilities. Presented answers 4 and 5 on a scale from 1="Poor" to 5="Excellent"

xii Table: Percentage of VET students who acquired certain competence, by country and socio-economic status.

	Austria	Germany	Greece	Latvia	Lithuania	Slovenia	UK (England)
<i>Below average</i>							
Being able to manage occupational tasks independently	78	80	45	45	48	58	73
Being able to work as a team member	89	82	45	59	65	73	77
Being able to quickly familiarise myself with new tasks related to job occupations	71	72	51	51	56	63	70
Being able to perform well under pressure	69	68	45	38	47	42	55
Being able to communicate ideas und suggestions to others clearly	65	56	52	47	50	50	66
Being able to approach and engage with others with confidence (e.g. networking)	73	68	53	54	58	60	68
<i>Average</i>							
Being able to manage occupational tasks independently	78	82	47	51	53	56	76
Being able to work as a team member	88	88	56	64	67	70	86
Being able to quickly familiarize myself with new tasks related to job occupations	76	76	57	58	60	61	77
Being able to perform well under pressure	69	69	45	41	44	44	67
Being able to communicate ideas und suggestions to others clearly	68	61	54	53	52	56	73
Being able to approach and engage with others with confidence (e.g. networking)	73	69	57	59	59	59	74
<i>Above average</i>							
Being able to manage occupational tasks independently	81	83	43	57	60	60	79
Being able to work as a team member	87	89	56	62	68	75	89
Being able to quickly familiarize myself with new tasks related to job occupations	77	78	69	66	68	68	84
Being able to perform well under pressure	74	70	37	45	55	51	71
Being able to communicate ideas und suggestions to others clearly	72	66	65	56	54	57	74
Being able to approach and engage with others with confidence (e.g. networking)	73	73	59	60	62	59	71

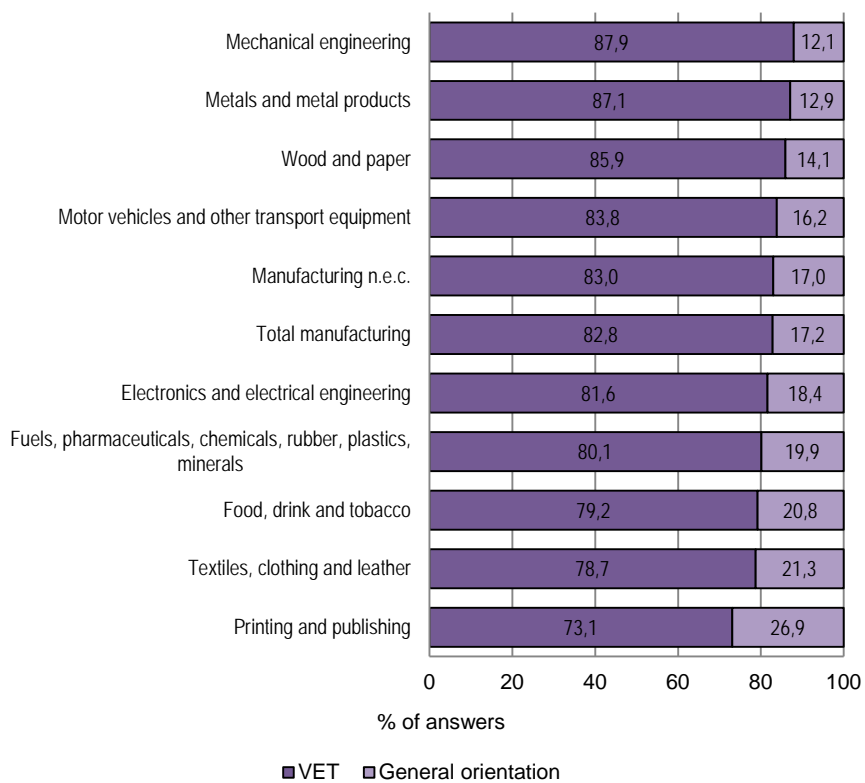
Question: E1a The following question asks for your perception of certain skills and abilities which are listed below. Please assess your current level of these abilities. Presented answers 4 and 5 on a scale from 1="Poor" to 5="Excellent"

xiii Table: Percentage of students who believe that their current programme prepared them well for surveyed competences all together, by country and gender.

	Austria	Germany	Greece	Latvia	Lithuania	Slovenia	UK (England)
Male	63	67	43	37	20	28	61
Female	60	64	56	47	23	30	64

Question: E1b Overall, to what extent does your current programme prepare you to these activities? Presented answers 4 and 5 on a scale from 1="Not at all" to 5="Very"

^{xiv} Chart: Distribution of medium-level graduates working in detailed manufacturing sectors by educational orientation, 15-34 year-olds, EU-27+, 2009.



Source: CEDEFOP, European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training. 2012. *From education to working life. The labour market outcomes of vocational education and training.* Pg. 62

^{xv} Table: Drivers of VET students for professional development, by country and gender in socio-economic strata

	Austria	Germany	Greece	Latvia	Lithuania	Slovenia	UK (England)
<i>Below average</i>							
Obtaining solid occupational proficiencies	59	53	49	57	42	55	75
Receiving a high income	85	80	51	64	56	66	80
Gaining job security	93	90	49	65	63	61	80
Having responsibility at work	73	71	50	63	64	55	75
Having opportunities to learn new things at work	76	77	49	63	67	63	82
Undertaking interesting tasks in the workplace	84	81	44	56	56	69	80
Having a job that makes me happy	91	89	58	69	72	77	86
Having a good relationship with colleagues	90	88	58	64	73	85	88
Advancing to a high level of status in society	57	51	48	56	62	78	78
Having enough spare-time to do other things in life	81	75	37	54	60	82	78
Making and maintaining relationships with others (e.g. family and friends)	77	75	62	68	75	82	78
<i>Average</i>							
Obtaining solid occupational proficiencies	66	67	50	60	47	56	80
Receiving a high income	85	86	53	68	59	64	88
Gaining job security	94	95	53	70	69	56	86
Having responsibility at work	71	77	48	64	72	55	84
Having opportunities to learn new things at work	80	81	48	65	70	61	87
Undertaking interesting tasks in the workplace	89	85	45	61	58	62	85
Having a job that makes me happy	96	93	57	72	73	76	91
Having a good relationship with colleagues	94	95	60	69	75	80	88
Advancing to a high level of status in society	59	53	49	61	64	71	75
Having enough spare-time to do other things in life	84	79	39	60	60	76	76
Making and maintaining relationships with others (e.g. family and friends)	81	76	63	72	76	80	86
<i>Above average</i>							
Obtaining solid occupational proficiencies	75	75	68	69	47	61	93
Receiving a high income	79	80	69	67	59	67	86
Gaining job security	87	93	71	70	69	51	89
Having responsibility at work	77	74	60	69	73	55	91
Having opportunities to learn new things at work	83	80	60	70	73	64	94
Undertaking interesting tasks in the workplace	92	87	48	66	59	70	94
Having a job that makes me happy	97	96	70	79	78	77	96
Having a good relationship with colleagues	94	91	74	68	77	82	95
Advancing to a high level of status in society	54	49	47	61	64	73	72
Having enough spare-time to do other things in life	86	74	50	69	66	84	84
Making and maintaining relationships with others (e.g. family and friends)	78	74	74	76	75	85	92

Question: D1 How far do you agree with following statements concerning your professional and life goals? Presented answers 4 and 5 on a scale from 1="Not at all" to 5="Completely"

^{xvi} *Table: Students' preferences towards working in »services«, by country & gender in percentage.*

	Austria	Germany	Greece	Latvia	Lithuania	Slovenia	UK (England)
<i>Male</i>							
Industry (e.g. producing industry, steel, motor, oil)	41	53	30	26	39	31	37
Services (e.g. nursing, policing, hairdressing)	25	25	20	30	21	35	33
Trade (e.g. banking, financing, business)	21	18	23	33	31	28	34
Agriculture, forestry and fishery	16	8	11	18	14	16	4
Public administration (e.g. local government, education)	12	15	8	14	9	13	15
Non-governmental organisation (e.g. charities, not-for-profit organisations)	2	4	4	5	4	6	3
Other	17	18	24	15	11	19	6
<i>Female</i>							
Industry (e.g. producing industry, steel, motor, oil)	11	17	4	4	14	3	15
Services (e.g. nursing, policing, hairdressing)	45	48	65	60	54	57	50
Trade (e.g. banking, financing, business)	32	21	12	40	33	27	30
Agriculture, forestry and fishery	5	5	3	5	2	2	3
Public administration (e.g. local government, education)	26	24	9	12	18	23	19
Non-governmental organisation (e.g. charities, not-for-profit organisations)	5	5	7	10	7	11	4
Other	18	21	18	15	9	17	6

Question: D5 Which sector would you like to work to the most?

^{xvii} *Table: Percentage of VET students who consider to continue schooling, by country and type of programme*

	Austria	Germany	Greece	Latvia	Lithuania	Slovenia	UK (England)
Less demanding	34	45	38	37	36	35	34
More demanding	50	54	40	40	32	52	54

Question: D6 Do you plan to continue schooling or further education after your programme has ended (for example doing a specialised programme)? Presented answers 4 and 5 on a scale from 1="Definitely not" to 5="Definitely"

^{xviii} *Table: Percentage of VET students who consider to continue schooling, by country and socio-economic status*

	Austria	Germany	Greece	Latvia	Lithuania	Slovenia	UK (England)
Below average	29	42	32	32	34	39	51
Average	44	46	42	41	38	51	44
Above average	58	59	61	58	47	57	46

Question: D6 Do you plan to continue schooling or further education after your programme has ended (for example doing a specialised programme)? Presented answers 4 and 5 on a scale from 1="Definitely not" to 5="Definitely"

^{xix} Table: Students' main drivers for continuing education, by countries and employment/programme sector in percentage

	Austria	Germany	Greece	Latvia	Lithuania	Slovenia	UK (England)
<i>Industry</i>							
Further education enables me to follow my professional interest	67	62	41	44	50	54	71
Further education enables me to gain a good qualification/education	83	80	41	65	59	67	75
Further education enables me to take on leadership role later on in life	70	70	38	61	42	59	71
Further education enables me to earn a high income later in life	83	83	58	71	62	68	82
Further education enables me to become a expert in my field	74	72	61	65	62	69	85
Further education enables me to enhance my career options	78	83	50	68	62	69	80
Further education enables me to postpone starting a full-time work	31	27	33	42	33	42	40
Further education enables me to experience a pupil exchange programme	18	17	23	34	30	29	42
Further education enables me to fulfil my parents expectations	27	29	32	45	37	39	56
<i>Service</i>							
Further education enables me to follow my professional interest	72	62	42	54	50	52	80
Further education enables me to gain a good qualification/education	85	85	47	73	64	63	85
Further education enables me to take on leadership role later on in life	70	69	40	65	44	53	68
Further education enables me to earn a high income later in life	80	78	53	69	61	61	85
Further education enables me to become a expert in my field	69	67	58	69	64	63	82
Further education enables me to enhance my career options	83	78	54	77	65	71	82
Further education enables me to postpone starting a full-time work	30	26	33	44	31	35	46
Further education enables me to experience a pupil exchange programme	29	20	19	42	33	30	44
Further education enables me to fulfil my parents expectations	26	28	22	35	32	37	45

Question: D8 This is about your opinion regarding further education (e.g. advanced training or studying). How far do you agree with the statements below about undertaking further education (or participate in further training)? Presented answers 4 and 5 on a scale from 1="Not at all" to 5="Completely"